

JACK SEYMOUR

Interviewed by: Raymond Ewing

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Q: This is a Foreign Affairs oral history interview with Jack Seymour. It's the 20th of November, 2003, and this interview is being conducted at the offices of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training at the National Foreign Affairs Training Center and my name is Raymond Ewing.

Jack, it's really good to be and to have the chance after awhile to start this interview.

SEYMOUR: I'm looking forward to it very much.

Q: Why don't you let me know when you started in the Foreign Service and tell a little bit about what came before that, how you got interested in the Foreign Service to start with and what year did you start?

SEYMOUR: I started in June 1967. I had just returned earlier that month from three years duty in Berlin with the U.S. Army. Before that I had spent two years in training at various schools, one year at language school in Monterey studying Serbo-Croatian and another sort of combination of a year at Fort Holabird, Maryland, which was then the Army Intelligence Training School. I had entered the Army after graduating from Dartmouth College in June of 1962, reporting for infantry training at Fort Benning, Georgia. I had been interested in international affairs really from fairly early on. I'll make one correction; I grew up with the Navy. My father was a naval officer and basically all that my friends and I knew was the Navy and it was almost expected I would be going to the Naval Academy. However, I failed to read the eye chart properly as a freshman in high school and realized the Naval Academy was out, so I began to think of other things. On my mother's side, the family had been involved in international activities: my great-grandfather had been a diplomat and served as minister in various places including Colombia where he tangled in some way with the Roosevelt administration over the Panama Canal.

Q: This is the first Roosevelt administration?

SEYMOUR: Yes, the first Roosevelt administration. So it was not in my blood necessarily but something I grew up with. My grandfather had served as secretary to his father at the Paris Peace Conference after World War I and later worked with a construction company in Poland and in Iran, where it built a railway for the Shah in the 1930s. My father was assigned to the Military Assistance Advisory Group attached to the Embassy in Brussels, Belgium, in the '50s, when I was midway through high school. He worked with the Belgians to help develop a mine sweeping capability for their navy as part of their contributions to NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). So I had about two-and-a-half years of living overseas at an early stage. I wound up going to a high school in Germany, a dependent school, and graduated from there. Then I came back to the States to go to college and was already looking at the Foreign Service as almost the only way to get into international affairs apart from, maybe, banking, business or journalism.

Now the world has changed so much that there are many, many ways that didn't exist, or at least I was not aware of then. Indeed, since retirement from the Foreign Service, I have continued working on international affairs in the NGO (Non Government Organization) world. So the Foreign Service represents the bulk of my time overseas or working on international issues but not the only part of it, if you include five years in the Army and 12 with various foreign affairs NGOs.

Q: What was your college?

SEYMOUR: It was Dartmouth College.

Q: And the Serbo-Croatian language training in Monterey, was that the Defense Language Institute when you were actually in the Army?

SEYMOUR: Yes, and that was a little bit humorous and haphazard in a way. I learned that if I went on indefinite status while on active duty with the Reserves, I could probably "write my ticket" to language school, which I thought a great opportunity. I applied for Swahili, Arabic or Polish in that order and was offered Italian, Romanian or Serbo-Croatian. I chose Serbo-Croatian because it was a bit in line with my interest in Polish. I went to the school knowing only one word of the language, but the schooling there shaped my life in many ways.

Q: Having served briefly in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, I guess I'm curious why you were interested in Swahili along with Polish and what was the other language?

SEYMOUR: Arabic.

Q: Arabic, yes. Tell me about those two at least. And Polish, too.

SEYMOUR: I was interested in Swahili because I had graduated in 1962 and 1960, I guess it was, was called the "year of Africa," as many new countries emerged from colonial status during that time. I had studied this and thought Africa was a place to focus on and Swahili would be a good choice. As for the Arabic, I also had a strong interest in the Middle East and thought Arabic another good choice. I thought hard languages would be good because here was an opportunity to really get good training.

Q: Was the training pretty well done in those days at Monterey?

SEYMOUR: It was extremely well done. I have a basis to compare in that I later took Polish and German at the Foreign Service Institute in 1972 and 1979, respectively. I would say that in some ways the training at Monterey was much more thorough. The one thing they did not have at the time was the concept of the linguist, as FSI did, and probably still does, which I think is a superior arrangement. However, I found at Monterey the discipline and breadth of instruction was better. At any rate, it proved its worth in the sense that I was not assigned to Yugoslavia until six years later, after leaving the army and serving a two-year Foreign Service tour in the Department. I was able to go directly to my posting in Zagreb with only a few months brushing up by listening to tapes in the FSI language lab perhaps two or three times a week at the noon hour, going over from my State Department job.

When I arrived in Zagreb I was in pretty good shape with one exception: my speech was probably more Serbian than Croatian. Perhaps that is a shortcoming for Monterey in that, although they gave a nod to the Croatian variants, the instructors were mostly Serbian and the real emphasis was Serbian. And so when I arrived in Zagreb, although the two languages are really pretty close, though easily distinguished, I found I had a lot of further brushing up or extra learning to do to get the Croatian variant down. Here I would put in a plug for the post-language training, which really paid off in getting me familiar with Croatian or "Croatian-Serbian" as they sometimes would say. I since heard at various times that language training at post, or some posts is endangered because of budget constraints. That is a terrible shame because training at post in Zagreb made me much more effective in the work I had to do there and I'm sure the same would be true of others..

Q: And I assume you had German from your high school days?

SEYMOUR: I had German, well, I went to highschool in Germany, in Frankfurt, and I actually studied French there because my family was living in Brussels. But I picked up some German as well, mostly street German, though, which was in some ways a problem because I had little schooling and acquired bad habits that proved difficult to shake later on. When I did study German at FSI, they worked on that and got me to where I was more or less alright with the word order and the subjunctive, but they could not cure me completely.

Q: Okay. Anything else that we should talk about in terms of your pre-Foreign Service background that's relevant to experiences you had later?

SEYMOUR: No. I think my military experience was useful in because I was assigned to Berlin and I lived there and worked there for three years, gaining a pretty good understanding of how things were on the ground and a bit about the politics of it, both locally and internationally. That proved helpful when I worked later in German affairs. Also the kind of work I did in Berlin involved a lot of office tasks, writing reports, action memos, that sort of thing, rather than the typical military kind of work.

Another thing that in all of this I haven't mentioned is that this was the Vietnam-war era and later on, almost every day in my unit in Berlin, people were getting orders to Vietnam, so the unit was cut in half almost. In fact, the whole Berlin Brigade "defending freedom" at the Berlin Wall was reduced substantially in numbers, and there was a strong possibility I might have been curtailed and assigned to Vietnam as well. That did not happen but the reductions increased the work-and experience-for those left behind.

The Reserves had been put on indefinite status and the Defense Department was holding them beyond their basic obligation. I was in that category anyway, having accepted "indefinite status" in order to go to Language School. In any case, there was resistance and a class action suit was lodged, which the court upheld somewhat before I was due either to be extended and reassigned or to leave the army. I was working with both the Department of the Army and the Department of State in order to see which one I would wind up with. I had taken the Foreign Services exams in Berlin and had gone back to the States for the oral interview about a year and a half before my tour of duty in Berlin was up. When I was put on the rank-order list for appointment to the State Department, I inquired whether they could help with my release from the Army, but the State Department replied judiciously that it was up to the Army, which had told me it depended "on the world situation." In any case, the class action suit broke the way so I was able to return to the US on schedule, leave the Army in early June 1967, and report later that same month to the Department for the A-100 Class.

Vietnam came calling again, though, when after my tour in Zagreb I was assigned to the CORDS program. I returned to the Department pondering different options. As I recall, one could take either French or Vietnamese in preparation for a CORDS assignment. Opting for Vietnamese, however, meant one year of language training plus, I think, an 18-month tour-as opposed to six months of training in French and a 12-month tour. So I had decided on French, but I found on reporting in after home leave that Personnel had decided I would take Vietnamese. Then there were options on safe havens, near or far, where the family would stay, and how many R & R opportunities; and the choices all affected the length of one's tour. Ultimately, however, after returning from home leave, I learned that because of the Paris Peace Conference and the expected winding-down of the war, they had cancelled my training class, although they could arrange for me to go to Vietnam if desired. After consulting at home, I decide that was not the best career move, but the decision did put me in limbo for awhile.

Q: Well, let's back up just a little bit. I think we do want to cover this in a minute. You came into the Foreign Service in June 1967, you came to the Foreign Service Institute in the orientation program and then did you go immediately to Zagreb or were you kept here in Washington for awhile?

SEYMOUR: I was assigned first for two years to INR and that was at first a disappointment, as I recall. We had a large class and most of them went overseas; about 20 of a class of 70-75, maybe 80, were assigned to Washington offices.

Q: In those days that was a large class.

SEYMOUR: And I was jolted to be assigned to Washington because we all expected to go overseas. Also, my wife and I had not rented a place with permanence in mind and what we had was not good. We were faced immediately with task of finding a better place to live. And then the second kind of disappointment was to be assigned to INR which I of course knew about but which seemed to be out of the mainstream of Foreign Service diplomatic work. It turned out to be an excellent assignment, however. First of all, I worked with Martin Packman there, who became legendary. He did wonders for my writing, turning me from a graduate-student-cum-military writing style to a State Department one-very quickly! I mention graduate school because while in Berlin I went to a newly opened Boston University campus for an international relations master's degree, doing that at night.

Q: That was their program in Berlin?

SEYMOUR: Yes, it had just opened there, sort of competing with the University of Maryland and its extensive overseas programs, but BU was coming in at the graduate level. It was very good; I did a lot of research in the Free University library to which we had access and also a lot of extensive writing. I'll never forget when Martin after a few weeks on the job asked if I would do a study of Quebec and tensions between Canada and Quebec. This was in the fall of 1967, not long after de Gaulle had made his controversial "Vive Quēbec libre!" call that outraged Canadians, the English-speaking ones, as least, during a state visit that was consequently cut short. Partly because of the concerns his visit raised, INR decided it needed a full-time analyst on Canada. It turned out to be an absolutely fascinating time because of a changing of the political guard in major parties, the progressive conservatives, the Diefenbaker party, changed leaders when Robert Stansfield succeeded Diefenbaker, and then Lester Pearson relinquished leadership of the Liberals to Pierre Trudeau. Eventually Trudeau won the next elections and launched major reviews of both foreign policy and defense policy, and that was very interesting to follow. Then in Quebec René Lévesque burst upon the scene with a liberation manifesto and a new organization the Parti Québécois. All this created much interest in New York and Washington.

I could tell a little anecdote involving a living former statesman, you might say, and that was Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was then in the policy planning staff. He called me very excitedly on the day that the formation of the Parti Québécois was announced in the press wanting to know if we had the text of the Party's "manifesto." Fortuitously, I'd just been reading it in French in one of the Montreal newspapers. So I did a cut-and-paste job and brought it up to his office. He was very excited and kind of grabbed it away and went off with it. And then next thing there was a high-level meeting called, and Averell Harriman was there. He was Ambassador-at-Large, I believe, and Martin Packman attended as head of the Western European office of INR. Martin recounted that Brzezinski presented the problem in alarming terms, describing the possibility of a "Cuba on our northern doorstep." There was a lot of discussion about that, and Harriman, the "crocodile," seemed to be sleeping at the far end of the table, when at a certain point he "roused himself" and declared that the whole idea was nonsense. That pretty much ended the meeting, according to Martin, and it ended the perhaps overly emotional concern about Quebec.

We continued to watch the situation, but from a more sober perspective after that. Brzezinski had grown up and gone to school in Canada; including to McGill University; I think his father was a Polish diplomat there, just before or during the war. So he had a special interest in Canada.

Q: Interesting. So you were the INR analyst for Canada, your first Foreign Service assignment, and you probably didn't have a lot of experience with Canada before, except you went to college at Dartmouth, not too far away.

SEYMOUR: Yes, and I had gone up Canada to ski several times but that was it. Still, it turned out to be a really interesting assignment, and I valued what I learned. Later, I enjoyed keeping up with Canadian politics with Canadian colleagues in overseas posts, and I think they appreciated an American who knew something about it.

Q: I was, you know, about this same period, from '67 to '69 was in the trade agreements division of the economic bureau and working on the Canadian auto products agreement and some of the trade issues that we had with Canada at that time and went to Ottawa a couple of times and to Detroit but I don't think I was all that interested, and you probably weren't that interested in the economic trade aspects and I wasn't that interested in the politics at that juncture.

SEYMOUR: That's right. I remember on any given day we would get a stack of cables from Canadian posts and usually three-quarters of them had to do with economic issues of various kinds and a few with politics. But some of those economic issues were interesting, and they were certainly important. It was amazing the tangles we could get into with a neighboring country over things like branding whiskey; which at one time some Canadian firms were producing and calling bourbon, and our people making bourbon in Tennessee and Kentucky got pretty upset about that. There were also pollution problems in Allagash River in Maine and tariffs on our publication like Readers Digest and so forth, so each side had plenty to quarrel about.

Q: And there were issues involving trade and potatoes and turkeys and carrots.

SEYMOUR: Yes. There's so much interchange and along with that along come many problems.

Q: Okay. So, how long were you in INR on the Canadian desk?

SEYMOUR: A good two years, and then from there I went to Zagreb.

Q: And how did that assignment come to be? They knew that you had Serbo-Croatian?

SEYMOUR: Well actually, it was a little bit the reverse. I forget whether we had the open assignments at the time. I don't think we did. But I was working on my next assignment with my career counselor and he was telling me this was open. It was a counselor position in Zagreb and he would put me in for it, and he did. Because there was not the open-assignment process with the monthly job-opening lists, I'm not sure that the posts really knew too much what was going on unless it was communicated back through the European panel representative and the European bureau. At any rate, I did get paneled for that job in about January 1969, and that's when I began going over to FSI to listen to tapes. A couple of months later Steve Steiner, who was at the consulate came to Washington for consultations and looked me up. We had lunch or something and the main question he was interested in was did I have the language. When he learned that I had studied the language earlier and had been tested at FSI, he was much relieved. He said the Consul General had been very concerned about that. Then Steve was intrigued at how I had gotten the language, but when I explained, it was of course clear right away.

Q: That was January of 1969? So you actually went that summer to Zagreb?

SEYMOUR: Yes, to a consular position. The Consulate General then was a pretty big post, 10 Americans and 20 or more Foreign Service Nationals. Still, it was small compared to the Embassies where I later served. We were all sort of in it together, a small community of Americans and a small consular community as well. The Consulate was in an Austro-Hungarian-vintage building on a main square in the town, and I happened to occupy, as chief of the two-man consular section, a huge office on a corner with two large windows. One opened onto a balcony overlooking a park, and our flagstaff extended from the balcony railing. Every morning shortly after I came into the office, a Yugoslav employee would come by with the flag, the daily newspapers, and a cup of Turkish coffee. He put the newspapers and coffee on my desk, went to the balcony and ran the flag out the staff there. It was a pretty civilized routine.

Q: Let me go back just one more time to Martin Packman and the advice he gave you on drafting and particularly drafting in the State Department, in the government context. He was teaching you to write more concisely and focus exactly on your main points.

SEYMOUR: Yes, when I first arrived, he asked me to take some time and do a sort of a study of the overall situation. I think he thought it might be an intelligence memorandum, that is, a longish paper, a think-piece, as opposed to a shorter, one-to-two page intelligence note. Well, came back to him maybe three weeks later, he hadn't given me a deadline or anything, and I gave him 50 pages double-spaced on a Friday afternoon, and he almost literally fell off his chair when he saw this huge packet. He laughed and said, it looked interesting and he would take it over the weekend. On Monday he showed it to me, and he had turned it into three different assessments. He had just cut and pasted and reorganized every which way. It was a terrific job of restructuring, and I appreciated that, but I also felt badly for spoiling his weekend and for putting him to lot of editorial work that I should have done. I could tell he had he actually enjoyed it-but I saw the light after that.

Q: Didn't he later teach drafting here at the Foreign Service Institute for some years?

SEYMOUR: I think he did, I think he did and am sure he was an excellent teacher. He was that kind of person.

Q: Okay. Let's go back to Zagreb. You were married at the time?

SEYMOUR: I was. There are stories about all that but I returned to California where my wife had just finished graduate school at Stanford, and we got married and returned to Berlin where I finished my army tour. So when I entered the Foreign Service I was married.

There is one interesting thing about the assignment to Zagreb. As I mentioned, I was paneled to a consular position. This was just before the cone system came into effect; in fact, that happened while I was in Zagreb. In those days, a junior officer would spend up to six years going to a couple of different posts in several different functions-political, consular, maybe, economic if that applied-to get a sense for the work and where his or her abilities lay. At the time in Yugoslavia, we had the two slots in Zagreb and three in Belgrade and all occupied by would-be political officers who were chafing because they were doing consular work, felt shunted aside already, and had all sorts of complaints about that. Then, in the second of the two years I was in Zagreb word came that we would now have a four-cone system and that people would be assigned to each cone more or less permanently and could expect to most of their successive postings to jobs in that cone. Well, all of a sudden, we realized that we had lost those slots where would-be political officers where could get really valuable training and get out into the countryside, really see the people, and learn at an early stage in their careers. The change reduced the slots for junior political officers in Yugoslavia to one part-time position in Zagreb and, I believe, another one or two in Belgrade, a loss of at least half. This led to dismay and second-guessing, and I think we were a bit wiser after that about how personnel-system changes can work in unexpected ways. But I think that particular problem has been worked out to a certain extent.

Q: Yes, one thing that's been done is that first tour, to some extent second tour junior officers often do get assigned to consular jobs even though they're not in the consular cone because it's the junior consular positions that give them an opportunity to use the language, to sometimes travel around a bit and certainly have a lot of contact with nationals of the country, sometimes more than a junior political officer really can do.

SEYMOUR: You know, that's really true and that's how it was at the time in Belgrade. And another thing I found later on is that those two years of consular work were extremely valuable when I came to work on a country desk where I'd say about 50 percent of the activities or the inquiries I handled involved consular work in one way or another.

Q: I guess I am a little surprised that two years into the Foreign Service with a Washington assignment behind you but still as a pretty junior officer you were the chief of a two-man-two-person section and you basically did the whole range of consular work, American citizens' welfare and whereabouts and visas for Yugoslavs or Croatians going to the United States, the whole thing.

SEYMOUR: Yes, with the vice consul and an excellent Foreign Service National (FSN) staff, we did passport and citizenship and a lot of federal-benefits work too. Many of my really interesting experiences and, sometimes, fond memories involved the Social Security cases that sent me out into the countryside. I don't know whether you want to indulge these kinds of stories, but I recall many good experiences, essentially as a case officer for the Social Security Administration when a consular officer is asked to check into questions that arise-to ensure that the people, the right people, were really getting their checks or to clear up discrepancies in applications. For example, a married Yugoslav has gone to America and dies there and turns out he also married an American, so is his wife back in Yugoslavia whom he left, eligible for any part of his pension? Questions of this nature came up and the Social Security Administration would send us out to investigate.

I remember three situations in particular. The "cases" would accumulate and it was hard to keep up with them because we didn't have the staff for it, and also the distances could be considerable. At one point, we had three cases from three different islands off the Adriatic Coast in Yugoslavia. And I figured that to do those one by one, for me to go to each island would be extremely time-consuming. Generally, our first effort would be to invite the people to come to the consulate, but often they were too old, too poor, or too far away and could not make the trip. We usually did not have a deadline but we did not want too much time to lapse, so I decided to invite them each to come to Zadar, a town on the coast about a days train ride from Zagreb, where I took a hotel and went down the night before. Each came at the appointed hour and I did the interviews and got the necessary information. I think the hotel people were a little bit suspicious about what was going on, but there was no problem or interference as far as I'm aware. At any rate, we got the interviews done that way and I was kind of proud of myself for having figured out an efficient way to do it. To have gone to each of the islands would have taken the better part of a week, I'm sure.

Another memory I have is going to interview an old woman in Slovenia whose native language, only language, really, was Italian, so I conducted the interview with the assistance of her daughter, who spoke Italian, which I did not. Though Slovene, the daughter understood Serbo-Croatian and converted what I said in that language into Italian for her mother. It worked well, and I thought that was an intriguing linguistic situation, which also demonstrated the rich layering of cultures in the former Yugoslavia.

At the Consulate, we did have one or two FSNs who spoke Slovenian, and, as we were accredited there, we did have considerable correspondence in Slovenian, which they handled. I got so I could understand their drafts as I picked up words in Slovenian, but we had no training in it at post and my ability was limited. Serbo-Croatian was the standard language in Yugoslavia at that time, although it would be quite different now and, as I believe I mentioned, I was working on adapting my Serbian Serbo-Croatian to the Croatian variant. I ultimately achieved a 4-4 in the language and felt quite comfortable in it.

After a time, though, I ordered that we reply in Slovenian to all letters that arrived in that language. By then, I could read enough to understand what I was signing, and I could always question the Slovenian-speaking staff member about any questions, so it worked well, and I think we made a better impression on our Slovenian constituents.

A third memory about these Social Security trips-and still more are coming are coming to mind but I'll close with this one-involves my first real effort to take care of one of the cases. It meant driving to a town called Ilova?ak about 50 miles away from Zagreb and, on the map, looking like an easy trip. We had a consular four-wheel vehicle that I could have used and in fact was advised by my staff to use, but I figured it was close and I could drive my own car.

So I did, but after turning off the main road and off the secondary road, and a few more turn-offs, I came eventually to a dirt road and then a deeply-rutted wagon track. I went as far as I could with the family car and saw an old woman watching a couple of cows and I asked, "How far off to Ilova?ak?" She thought a bit and replied that if I continued around on the road it was perhaps another three kilometers, but then she pointed across a small valley to a cluster of houses over on the next hill and said that was it. So I asked if she would mind watching my car along with the cows, to which she agreed with a smile, and I set off down the valley. And you have to picture this, I am in a suit, carrying a briefcase and hiking down the hill and there's a little stream at the bottom. I jumped across that and met two or three school kids coming home with knapsacks tittering at me. Finally, I got up to the other side. Approaching the first little house, I asked three older men sitting on the porch where I could find the home of Gospodin (Mr.) so-and-so who has died back in America and one replied, "Oh, he's right here." It turned out that was a relative with the same surname; I think in the small town nearly everyone was connected one way or another. But I repeated that it was the one who had died, and they quickly pointed me to the right house and I went on and finally made it.

I was about three hours late. But the family had spread a big lunch for me, a chicken and peppers and slivovica, the ubiquitous plum brandy-homemade-and apples, all of which they insisted I have before we got down to business, which was to check their papers and establish that the woman had in fact been married to the deceased. It was a wonderful meal and I ate, being watched by the widow, an elderly woman, and a man and his wife, her son and daughter-in-law, I believe, and their two young children. The peppers were so hot that the slivovica, smooth but very strong and the only liquid on offer, was cooling by comparison. But I finally finished the meal and when we got to the business it was quickly evident that they had been married. They showed me a marriage certificate and family pictures, including one of the deceased in the casket, apparently sent from America. So I was able to do my report and substantiate it pretty well. Afterwards they wanted to ply me still further with food, obviously anxious to be good hosts to a government man because they had a stake in the outcome, but I also had the impression they were curious and honored to be hosting someone they saw as an "important" American. When I politely declined their offers, they insisted I take home a roast chicken, some apples, and a bottle of their excellent "slivo."

Eventually I broke off and the man offered to walk with me back to the car with the loot and then to show me the way to the main road. This I more or less knew but he insisted, I think from curiosity and perhaps to have the experience of driving in the car. I finally returned home much, much wiser about doing these things.

Q: Okay. Your story about going to the hotel in Zadar reminded me of a trip that we made about the same time, it was the early '70s, I was stationed in Rome, and we took a family trip and went up through Trieste and down the Yugoslav coast and took the ferry back to Italy from Zadar. And I think it was in Zadar, and I didn't speak any Serbo-Croatian and no experience in Yugoslavia but looked at a newspaper and it seemed to be saying something about Kissinger in China. I just couldn't understand that at all. And a few days later I realized exactly. I didn't believe it. I realized what had happened.

SEYMOUR: Wow!

Q: The consular district of the consulate in Zagreb was basically Croatia and Slovenia?

SEYMOUR: Yes. I remember making my introductory calls on the respective Croatian and Slovenian officials responsible for international affairs, which meant mainly dealing with the consulates, tourism, perhaps some commerce and investment. When the one in Ljubljana, the Slovenian capital, gave me his card, I noticed he had a strange, not very Slovenian-looking name, and after a little bit of talk I asked him about it and got an interesting story. His family was Irish and one of his forebears had come with Napoleon's troops to what was then called "Illyria" at the turn of the 18th century and settled down there, so he had an Irish name that was converted to be like a Slavic one.

Q: Yugoslavia has certainly been a crossroads, or what was Yugoslavia. You mentioned that many of the junior officers doing consular jobs in Zagreb and Belgrade, too, were really hoping to be political officers. I assume that was probably your aspiration as well. Did you get involved either in doing political reporting or have many reflections on the political situation at the time?

SEYMOUR: Not very much. I was actually pretty busy managing things consular, but I do have some reflections about the political work. I remember Harry Dunlop was the political officer and Will Crisp worked for him at one time, and, later, Leon Firth, and we often talked and shared impressions about the politics of Croatia and Yugoslavia. During the second year into my tour, in about 1970 there developed what came to be called the "Croatian Spring" because of its similarity to what had happened in Czechoslovakia in '67 and '68-the "Prague Spring."

Essentially, the Croatian Communist Party or League of Communists as the parties were known in Yugoslavia became caught up in a popular, nationalist movement. From early in my tour I, we all, encountered a kind of Croatian national feeling mixed with resentment that Croatia deserved a better deal in the federation. A typical complaint was that Croatia, like Slovenia, was more advanced and was earning more money from tourism and exports than the other republics but was paying too much back to the poorer ones. It actually reminded me a bit of some of the disputes and complaints I had followed in Canada between the provinces and the federal government. That is, the question of getting a fair share in the redistribution of earnings or wealth quickly becomes a political issue. As in Quebec, economic fundamentals were complicated by nationalistic feelings and social or ethnic differences.

The nationalism caught fire in Croatia at that time, with an increasing use of symbols and increasingly outspoken public discussion. Pretty soon the Croatian party leaders faced the dilemma of whether to ride this or to suppress it. They had an interest in riding the movement, if they could control it, because that would increase their clout in Belgrade, and several key leaders were beginning to mobilize the mounting public nationalism in that way.. It was already getting pretty out of control, though, and acquiring an anti-Yugoslav, anti-Serb tone, and that provoked reactions. Federal authorities and Serbian party leaders and others began to suggest that the Croatian leadership had lost control of events there.

A year or so after I left, in late 1971 or 72, Tito cracked down on the Croatian leaders. He did it deftly, as I recall, suggesting publicly that the Croatian Party leaders were unable to control a threat to Yugoslavia and the Army would have to step in. Harry Dunlop was still at the Consulate General during that time, and I talked with him later when he returned, so most of what I know and remember comes from his reporting that I read while in the Operations Center and from talking with him when he returned to Washington. However, I remember from conversations earlier with people in Zagreb while I was still there how excited they were about the tantalizing chance for liberalization and greater political and economic leeway for Croatia vis-à-vis what they saw as an oppressive, Serb-controlled federal structure.

Students and intellectuals were carrying the movement for the most part on the popular side, but they were lionizing several of the party leaders who were also going along with it. Both the people and these leaders sought to capitalize on the movement to press for a better deal for Croatia in federal party and government councils: increased control of policy and of economic institutions. That connection of leaders with the popular movement which itself was in the Titoist lexicon moving from acceptable national pride to "chauvinism," putting one's own nation or republic above any other or above Federal Yugoslavia. Such chauvinism, a huge "no-no," was viewed as an existential threat, and it became the kiss of death for these Croatian leaders. In the face of Tito's threat to unleash the army to protect the Yugoslav nation, they were overwhelmed, in effect isolated, and had to stand down. They were removed and hard-line centralists put in their places.

Q: People like Tudjman or was he somewhere else?

SEYMOUR: No, he was not on the scene. One of the new hard-line leaders had been the editor of the main Croatian daily, Vjesnik, who had been my host when I represented the Consulate General at an "Akademia" celebrating 900 years of Croatia on the Adriatic, but that's another story. A key leader of the nationalist movement was a woman Savka Dapčević-Kužar, I believe. Another was Mika Tripalo, or something like that. And then there was a third. These were the ones who were voicing from the party the demand for a fair deal. They were trying to be more circumspect, but the popular movement was becoming more nationalistic. People were displaying the Croatian checkerboard flag and that kind of thing and pressing too far to the point of "chauvinism" and antagonism to what they saw as domination by Serbia and federal Yugoslavia. Tito and the central party leadership cracked down on that. That was the main political event of the time I was there, although in the year or so before I arrived in Zagreb there had been a similar movement among Serbian intellectuals and students, which was similarly suppressed, though it had not spread so far.

Looking back, the Croatian Spring foreshadowed some of the forces that drove the breakup of Yugoslavia later on. Interestingly, though, the Slovenians, who were in the forefront in the 1988-90, were sitting quietly on the sidelines in 1970, much to the annoyance of the Croatians who thought they were "fighting" for Slovenia's interests as well.

Q: Okay. Why don't you talk a little bit about the Third Country nationals, particularly from behind the Iron Curtain, because Yugoslavia was considered on other side of it? Who happened to turn up in Croatia?

SEYMOUR: Yes, from time to time, people from Bulgaria or Romania, maybe Czechoslovakia would come to the consulate wanting to get out, wanting to go to the States, wanting asylum or whatever. Usually their passports would be validated quite the reverse of ours, which were good for any country except few specified ones like Cuba, China, and one or two others with which we had no or very tenuous relations. Theirs were valid only for the countries specified, usually just the Warsaw pact countries, which would be specifically listed by a stamp. Then there would be an additional stamp for Yugoslavia, which had allowed them to enter that country. Once in Yugoslavia, some would try to go farther.

At that time we had an arrangement with the Austrian consulate because Austria had refugee processing facilities. I reaffirmed this agreement with my Austrian counterpart: if we would provide a letter to the Austrians saying that based on a personal interview we had reason to believe that the bearer would qualify for immigration to the United States, then the Austrians would give the bearer a visa. We understood from practice that the Yugoslav border officials would then generally wave them through. So it was a way, a small way perhaps, in which we were able help some people from time to time.

Q: So these individuals would reach the refugee facilities in Austria and then presumably would apply for admission to the United States. Did you ever have a problem where they would be turned down and then there would be a dispute between your interpretation and somebody else's?

SEYMOUR: Well, at least during my two years there I never heard of any difficulty like that.

Q: Okay. You want to talk a little bit more about some of the issues involved in dealing with permanent US residents or American citizens?

SEYMOUR: Well, at the time we had many American tourists of all different kinds, and sometimes the knapsack ones would get in difficulty losing money or getting in trouble of some kind, and I remember having to vouch for them to the Yugoslavs on occasion. They could not believe that often these kids came from rather well-off families or were students at good colleges just seeing Europe on a shoestring. We set up a modest slush fund to help out some people from time to time, and in most cases they paid the money back.

Being far from the coast where most of the tourists went caused difficulties for us from time to time. Driving fast, it took about six hours to get to Rijeka, possibly eight to Split and 12 to Dubrovnik. And those were all within our district. So whenever we had deaths or other problems needing personal attention it was a strain. And I recall one situation that brought a number of different interesting issues to light.

Briefly, it was an American from New York or New Jersey who drove off the road in a small sports car on the coast near Zadar and was killed. At that time President Nixon was coming to Yugoslavia and making for the first time ever a presidential stop in Zagreb, so we were turned inside out over that. I was having to handle the incident with the authorities in Zadar by phone, and several different problems came up. One is that the man had two passports under different names. Not having concrete identification, we could not issue a death certificate, but the family was naturally pressing very hard for this. They were of poor means and were concerned about how his widow would be taken care of. They were Jewish and especially concerned that there be quick attention to the burial. There was a brother, brother-in-law I think, who was pressing us very hard for fast action on the death certificate. I was about at the point of asking the Department for permission to issue a "provisional death certificate" based on the name that we thought was the most likely one. Fortunately at about that point we learned through Interpol and the FBI that using fingerprints, I think, they were able to determine definitively who it was.

There remained the problem of burial. The authorities in Zadar had taken care of that, assuring me they had given a dignified burial and had set up a marker and so on. The family was concerned, however, that his remains had been thrown into a potter's field so at the next opportunity I planned to go down there. They also wanted the Jewish rites to be read over the grave and I discussed this at some length with a colleague of mine, Leon Furth, who was doing political and administrative work at the consulate. This is Leon Firth who later went on to become advisor to Senator and then Vice President Al Gore.

Q: And presidential candidate.

SEYMOUR: And presidential candidate Al Gore. And Leon was extremely helpful in explaining what the Jewish custom would be and various ways to do the right thing. If there was no rabbi present, which there was not in Zagreb, then a minyan of 10 Jews could read the rites. Barring that, any senior Jew could perform the rites, and Leon offered to do so. I being very conscientious put all this into a detailed letter explaining the possibilities to the family and I showed that letter for approval to the Consul General, Orme Wilson. I think his father had also been in the Foreign Service and Orme was very traditional, very upright a very good officer; I admired him a lot. But he was livid with me over this letter. He came around to my area waving it and saying it was no one's business the religion of any officer at a Foreign Service post, that we are Foreign Service officers of the United States and one was as good as another and that I should not be getting into this at all in discussion with the family. So the letter was reworked and shortened considerably and in it I offered to go down and view the grave and report back to the family.

I did that and was quite impressed that it was not by any means in a potter's field, it was on the edge of the main section of the cemetery. I took numerous photos to show this. On the train going back, however, I was writing my notes for the report to the family and explaining all about the wonderful pictures I would be sending them, when suddenly I realized that in this Catholic, though Communist country, the local authorities, trying to do the right thing, had put a cross over the grave, and that I had failed at the time to make that connection and would have to rework everything. I got on the phone to the authorities as soon as I returned to Zagreb and told them they had to fix the marker as well.

So the consular experience was extremely valuable to me in many ways. I enjoyed it and learned a great deal about life.

Q: This individual had two U.S. passports in different names?

SEYMOUR: Two U.S. passports. He apparently had been passing bad checks and doing other things. He was a bit of an operator evidently.

Q: You mentioned that Orme Wilson was consul general at the time. Was he there throughout your tour or was he-?

SEYMOUR: No, I was there two years, Bob Owen was the first consul general and then Orum Wilson succeeded him during my second year.

Q: You mentioned the visit of President Nixon to Zagreb. You want to talk a little bit more about that in terms of your involvement?

SEYMOUR: Yes. Well, the whole Consulate was involved and the Embassy too. Politically, of course, we at the Consulate were interested in this effort to give a nod to Croatia and in a way there was some tension, I think, between us and the Embassy over this. We, the US, had to be careful not to go too far. But the Croats were certainly extremely proud and pleased that the President was coming to their republic and wanted to do everything right. He did not overnight, which made it much easier, but he did go to Tito's birthplace at Kumrovac, which is not far from Zagreb but involved a motorcade journey of perhaps an hour or so. I recall that the advance team laid communications wire the whole way so the President would never be out of touch with the White House. That was my first experience with an advance team and it was really something. I was generally a go-fer during that time. I wasn't necessarily in charge of any particular aspect of it. But I recall some interesting experiences.

One in particular had to do with security arrangements. When our security people came in the advance team, we arranged meetings with their Yugoslav counterparts, which was really the first time that these people were brought out for us. There were numerous meetings, and I recall at one point they were discussing the motorcade from the airport and how many people would be in the crowd along the route. The U.S. security advance team chief asked the Yugoslav head of security for an estimate. The Yugoslav thought for a minute and replied, "I cannot answer that, that's a political question." And sure enough, when the day came, the school children were turned out and the factory and office workers were bussed to the route in numbers sufficient to make the political point that they wanted.

Q: Okay. President Nixon's visit to Zagreb, I wonder if that was in September of 1970. Does that sound right to you?

SEYMOUR: It does.

Q: Yes. Because he came to Rome and it may have been the same trip.

SEYMOUR: I think it probably was the same trip.

Q: And he also went to Belgrade?

SEYMOUR: Yes he did.

Q: Yes. All right, I guess I wanted to ask you a little bit about the relations between the Consulate General and the Embassy; I think you've talked a bit about it in terms of the President's visit. In terms of your work, you had pretty full autonomy or did you, were you supervised by the head of the Consular Section in Belgrade as well or?

SEYMOUR: Well, I had full autonomy and was supervised by and my efficiency reports were written the Consulate in Zagreb. The Consul General was my rating officer, and the DCM in Belgrade was my reviewer. However, there was a Consul in Belgrade who was more senior than I.

Q: In Belgrade at the Embassy?

SEYMOUR: At the Embassy. I think he had had one additional tour and, being at the Embassy, he was closer to policy, could speak with Embassy authority, and had influence on overall consular policy and procedures in the country. It also was really important to coordinate closely, because often, for example, visa applicants, especially from the poorer parts of Yugoslavia outside our consular district-parts of Bosnia, southern Serbia or Kosovo, and Macedonia, or Montenegro-would show up in Zagreb. We always called Belgrade and to see if they had been there first and we also asked them that. Usually they would say no and then we would ask why not, because they lived in the Embassy's consular district and except for parts of Bosnia were usually closer to Belgrade. Often they had already been turned down by the embassy and were trying to circumvent that. But a lie to us about visiting the Embassy would of course prejudice their chances of approval in Zagreb. So it was really important to check with Belgrade and vice versa to know this. Similarly, with welfare and whereabouts cases it was important to check to make sure we had covered the whole country, for example, in looking for a lost tourist, so we communicated closely.

One way we consulted was through the weekly pouch run. Someone had to accompany the pouch, and we and the Embassy traded off. This was always a good opportunity to spend a day or more comparing notes with our consular counterparts. But the traveling was no mean thing. When the weather was good we sometimes drove or flew but in bad weather we usually took the train, which often meant an overnight. I remember once having to meet Erwin von den Steinen, my counterpart, on the platform in the railroad station in Zagreb in November. He had tried to come by plane because he hoped to get back to Belgrade that same day for appointments the next day. He was thwarted by a dense autumn fog in Zagreb. We had tried to persuade him that the weather was bad and it wasn't a good thing to come by plane and to just take the train instead, but he insisted despite several flight delays. Finally he gave in but had to take a late train that didn't arrive until about 10 o'clock that night. I went down to meet him, and somehow we actually missed each other on the platform; because of the fog and the dark night. We met up ultimately, but he was not very happy.

Lifestyle differences sometimes caused irritation between people at the Embassy and Consulate. There was a commissary run that came once a week to supply our very, very small commissary. Otherwise, we generally got our food from the "dolac," a huge open-air market in Zagreb where my wife and others went two or three times a week just as the Yugoslavs did. It was the main place to get any substantial food, and, of course, that could be a chore, but the "dolac" was a fascinating place. Still, our lack of a regular commissary like the one in Belgrade, which was supplied in turn from Western Europe, was considered a hardship, and there was a bit of tension over this.

At the time Zagreb had just retained its 10-percent hardship differential status, while the Embassy had just lost its hardship status altogether. Zagreb stayed on the list, because there was no American doctor in Belgrade but not in Zagreb and also because of the food supply situation that I just mentioned, and maybe some other things too. But the problem was that in way Zagreb was a much more attractive city, and it was much closer to Italy and Austria. Belgrade was a little bit farther east and at the time a little bit less pleasant as a city to live in, I guess, and so there were these tensions between the staffs at the two places.

Q: Did you have much to do with the Embassy in Vienna or the, I don't know if you did with the Embassy in Rome or the consulate, was there a consulate in Trieste in those days?

SEYMOUR: The consulate in Trieste had been closed a few years before I arrived. There had been one for a long time, and I understand it had been really valuable to have it there. But for expense reasons, I guess, it was closed. Also there had been a consulate in Sarajevo until 1966, but that was closed too.

Q: I think the consulate in Trieste was reopened later.

SEYMOUR: Was it?

Q: Yes. Because I know in '84 I had some involvement with them. They were open; I think it was a one-man post at that point, very small.

SEYMOUR: Well, I think that would be a good place to have one. We did have contact with the Embassy in Vienna. In particular, our visa officer, my colleague was nearly every day in telephone contact with the immigration office attached to the Embassy there. They did have an INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) officer there which was good because it helped a lot with the waivers that we had to get fairly often because so many of our visa applicants were "involuntary" members of the Party or affiliated youth or labor organizations. In some cases, we could make a ruling, but in certain cases we had to contact the INS for a waiver. So it was good to have them nearby. I imagine that the political officers, I think I mentioned Harry Dunlop, were in fairly close touch with their counterparts in Vienna, as well. I do remember when I served later on the desk that the people in the Austrian Embassy in Washington were very close Yugoslav watchers and generally had good contacts and good information.

Q: How about with the Embassy in Budapest?

SEYMOUR: No, not so much. I can't really recall much business with them. One thing I remember about Hungary is that an American without a visa would not be allowed into the country, which was unlike the situation in Yugoslavia, where an American tourist without a visa could generally get one easily at the border. Occasionally American tourists came to us to complain that they had been put off the train in Szeged on the border and were very unhappy about that. But I don't recall any real contact with our Embassy Hungary. We always took pains to alert travelers who came our way that if they were going to Hungary, they needed to get a visa beforehand.

Q: Okay. Anything else we should talk about in connection with this assignment to Zagreb?

SEYMOUR: I can't think of anything particular, although I have many fond memories of this, my first overseas post.

Q: And I think at the beginning you said something about after Zagreb being assigned to the CORDS program in Vietnam and the question was whether you were going to study French or I guess Vietnamese. That would have been in 1971?

SEYMOUR: That was in 1971.

Q: What happened then, finally? You said that eventually the assignment was cancelled.

SEYMOUR: it was cancelled because of the political situation. The Paris Peace Talks were beginning to produce results and it was clear we would be winding down our involvement in Vietnam. When the assignment was cancelled, I was in limbo. My career counselor was looking for other assignments, but there wasn't too much at the time, it being very late in the cycle, and it was going to take awhile. I had just completed my home leave and I wanted to do something, so I volunteered to work as a "freebie" in my home office, the Office of Eastern European Affairs. There's probably a better term for it now.

Q: Over complement.

SEYMOUR: Over complement. Yes. And I worked with John Baker, who at the time was working hard to get legislation passed to set up the Board for International Broadcasting (BIB) as a Congressionally funded operation to oversee Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe. This was a special portfolio in the Office of East European Affairs, later to be the Office of East European and Yugoslav Affairs (EEY) but then called EE. John Baker was the Czech desk officer, but he also had this responsibility for the radios and so I helped him a lot with that and it was very interesting and worthwhile. I got a an introduction to what life and work on the desk was like, and later when I came to serve in EEY myself I also had the portfolio for liaison with the BIB. The work this time in EE lasted about a month and then I went to the Operations Center for a year, which was also very good duty.

There was one amusing anecdote about this time in limbo. A couple of days into it, my career counselor called and asked if I would like to go into Mongolian language training at University of Indiana, which actually had some appeal to it. They wanted to keep people in the pipeline, training them in Mongolian, in the event that eventually we would have relations with Mongolia. Meanwhile, they would generally be assigned to the embassy in Moscow as Mongolia watchers. At this point, Personnel was having a hard time coming up with someone with Russian language already and my career counselor thought that maybe Serbo-Croatian would be close enough that he might be able to nominate me. But I thought it over and thought that was really kind of a side turn for me and so I continued to wait and see what would come up in the Operations Center on assignment bid. Besides, Serbo-Croatian was not that close to Russian, so it really would not work.

Q: So they were assigning people to Indiana University for Mongolian training at that time. At some point they also did it in Britain, in the UK I believe.

SEYMOUR: Yes, I've heard that too.

Q: I don't know if that was earlier or later.

SEYMOUR: I'm not sure. I had heard that too. I can't remember which university but yes.

Q: Okay. So you did a year in the Operations Center, which was rotation 'round the clock, shift work. I think that's been pretty well covered in these interviews.

SEYMOUR: Yes. There are a lot of people who went through that.

Q: And you did some editing too, of the morning -

SEYMOUR: There was the weekly Current Foreign Relations or something that? But I think you mean the Morning Summary; I can't remember the name exactly, but it was a summary of reporting from over the night. There was also an Afternoon Summary, I believe, and working on them helped me a good deal to be concise.

Q: Further in your drafting.

SEYMOUR: Further polishing of my drafting skills.

Q: Drafting short rather than long. Okay, and after a year at the Operations Center you did what? This again brings you to some time in '72 I guess.

SEYMOUR: Yes. Then I went into Polish language training at FSI and spent about 20 months in that. I did have to leave early, I think one month early, because someone at the Embassy in the consular section had apparently been sent out for some kind of an affair he was having with a Polish tennis pro at the American Embassy tennis courts that got him into trouble. They were pretty upset with him for security reasons. Warsaw was reputed to be a tough post that way. In any case, they needed to staff the consular section because the summer was coming, so they in effect yanked me out of the class and sent me there. I had a good month, six weeks or so of consular work before moving to my assignment as the junior officer in political officer in the small political section there.

Q: But they needed you to fill in for this-

SEYMOUR: They needed me to fill in and so I went early.

Q: Because of your consular experience you had before.

SEYMOUR: That's right.

Q: But you weren't kept in that for more than a few, six weeks.

SEYMOUR: It was about six weeks and then another consular officer came, I forget now exactly the details of all of that. But, again, I actually appreciated the opportunity to talk with a lot of working Poles and to learn a good deal about life, which there was good background for working in the political section and also important later when I served on the Polish desk.

Q: So this was 1973. You had been in the language program long enough to get up to a 3/3 level?

SEYMOUR: Yes, I got a 3/3 and of course having Serbo-Croatian helped a lot.

Q: With the Polish.

SEYMOUR: With the Polish. They're a lot of similarities in the basic constructs of these two Slavic languages and in their vocabularies. There are many cognates and some false ones, but even those you can sort of understand and make connections that help to grasp their meanings quickly, so that helped me build vocabulary quickly.

Q: Okay. Why don't we talk about your assignment in the political section in the embassy in Warsaw? This was roughly in late spring of 1973, and you were there two years?

SEYMOUR: I went out in May or early June and by the end of the summer in '73 I was in the political section in Warsaw. I extended for a year and served a total of three years there.

Q: Okay. Why don't you talk about the situation in Poland at the time and your work and who the ambassador was.

SEYMOUR: Well, the ambassador was Richard Davies and the DCM was John Davis throughout the whole time I was there. The political situation when I arrived was a little unsettled because there were still ramifications from the strikes and the bloodshed in Gdansk in 1970-71. Edward Gierek was the party leader who emerged from that period, replacing Gomulka, but he had not fully consolidated his position and faced a potential, although I think diminishing threat, from a nationalist group called the "Szl?ska (Silesian) or Natalin Group" I forget now the name of their putative leader, but they represented a conservatives, nationalistic wing of the Polish Communists and were thought to be plotting moves to displace Gierek, a relatively moderate, if one can use that term, Western-oriented Communist. We were all watching with some concern to see whether he would last or be overthrown.

It was also, though, a time of opening to the west. Gierek himself, unlike most Polish Communist leaders who really had gotten their experience and training to the East, had spent six or eight years in Belgium and France working in the mines. It was there that he had first joined a Communist party. He spoke French, had a feel for the West that others lacked, and he was very interested in seeking Western investments to energize Poland's economy. It was keeping our econ section very busy with visiting American bankers and businessmen. Harry Kopp, who became head of the section at one point, predicted their borrowing would soon get the Poles in debt they could not manage. He predicted that in three years they would be going to their creditors to ask for debt rollovers, and this was more or less what happened, though perhaps a bit later. Essentially, even with this tremendous help from the West, they just could not make the system work to build a solid economy.

The high point came in mid-1975 when Gierek consolidated his hold on the leadership at the Fifth Congress of the Polish United Workers Party. I remember that outwardly things seemed hunky dory from the Party's standpoint, but below the surface there was a lot of tension and I was in a way charged with following an aspect of that as I dealt mainly with Polish internal affairs. Jack Scanlan was the Political Counselor, and he tended to concentrate on bilateral relations, which were probably more extensive than in earlier times, certainly in the economic realm, but there were many visits back and forth and a lot to do in the overall relationship which fell to him in support of the DCM and Ambassador. I didn't really get into bilateral affairs so much but I was basically given a writ to try to understand the country and study and learn all that I could and report on whatever seemed significant.

Q: Mainly internal.

SEYMOUR: Yes, mainly internal, although I did follow Polish-German relations a bit and a little bit Polish-Soviet ties. I came into contact with the lay Catholics, the lay Catholic organization and with the church people early on, because I was also specifically responsible for "church-state relations" and also such things as Jewish issues. Many Americans came from Poland, and among them a high number of Polish Jews who themselves or whose parents had escaped the Holocaust. They were naturally much concerned with the condition of cemeteries, the synagogues, the status of the remaining, mostly small Jewish communities in their old hometowns, and the Jewish legacy in Poland.. This focused our attention on the question of access and treatment by the Poles of these sites and relics or remnants of the pre-War Jewish heritage.

I remember in one instance helping in a small way a Lubavitcher group to locate some treasured medieval scrolls. They were at the Jewish Historical Museum in Warsaw, which they suspected and had come to Poland to see. I helped them get in touch with its director whom I had come to know, and I remember well the rather moving scene when he brought out the scrolls they were seeking and they unrolled them on his desk, recognized them, and were visibly overcome with emotion and excitement. There was some bureaucratic rigmarole with the Ministry of Culture to get permission for the manuscripts to leave the country, but eventually they were sent to the Lubavitcher community in New York.

I also worked a lot with the Catholic Church and became extremely impressed with the role of the Church and its affiliated structures. And by those I mean what they call the Catholic intellectuals who had discussion "clubs" all around the country. They also had members in Parliament from two different Catholic organizations, PAX was one of them, but PAX had broken with the Church years before and was considered more or less influenced by the Communist party. The other one was called ZNAK. Each was allowed, I believe, five members in the Sejm, the parliament, and they each had their own periodicals. I believe there was a third, much smaller group with two members.

ZNAK was the group that worked most closely with the Church and through ZNAK the Catholic intellectuals and the Church had a foothold in the parliament.

During the time I was there, for reasons I can't recall now, the government wanted to revise the constitution, among other things to insert something in the preamble mentioning the Soviet Union, the close relationship with the Soviet Union, and the intellectuals, both Catholic and non-believers, were incensed by this. There were a number of other contentious issues, so the question of amendments became a political issue that had great symbolic importance, and I was constantly discussing all this with many people in the Church and in the intellectuals clubs. It became rather dramatic, and I recall that in the final vote in the Sejm at least one of the ZNAK members against the amendments. That was a rare public gesture against the regime, as most votes were unanimous, to the point where it was joked that the Speaker had a button he pushed to send all the hands up when a vote was called.

Throughout my time in Warsaw, I regularly touched base with three offices of the Church. The first was Cardinal Wyszyński's secretariat. He was Archbishop of Gniezno, first capital of Poland and seat of the Polish Church, and thus the Primate or leader of the Church. He had a very tough-minded chef de cabinet whom I used to meet once a month. Before our business this priest would often lecture me, for example, about why the US was selling grain to the Soviet Union, which we were doing at that time, and did I not know that ever since Ivan the Terrible the Russians/Soviets had gobbled up ten kilometers a year to their west and they still wanted more. Things like that expressed his where he stood politically.

Another regular stop was at the Episcopate Secretariat. There I also met the priest who handled Church affairs around the country and would learn from him many things that were happening to the people and the Church at the grass roots. He was well informed, because he received petitions from people who had been wronged by the regime, and through him I got a sense of how things were. For example, one day he told me about a man who had been in his office just before me who was a choir master in the local church and his wife was a teacher in the school. He had been threatened that she would lose her job if he did not quit the choir and join the Party. What to do? The man came to this Warsaw office hoping the Church could somehow intervene on his behalf.

The third place where I stopped, actually every week, was the Episcopate Information Office, which was housed in the old Papal Nuncio's residence, a very fine old building in Warsaw. There I would go to talk, if I could, but at least to get the text of the weekly homily that was read out in pulpits all around Poland. It was like a communiqué^{1/2} and provided a good sense of the Church's position, what it was telling the people on various things. A saying I learned in Poland was that the Party members listened to the radio while the people listened to the priests, a very apt description of the situation then.

Another experience gave me further insight into the Church and its role in the country. One of my contacts was a journalist playing an interesting double game, as many of them did and sometimes would talk about. This one was the foreign affairs editor of the peasant party newspaper. Now, I mentioned that there were a couple of places in the Sejm, the parliament, for Church-related Parties. There also was a United Peasants Party, it was called, and it was a supposedly non-communist but was clearly doing the bidding of the dominant communist or Polish United Workers Party. It replaced the prewar Peasants Party, whose leader was the last non-communist Prime Minister ousted in 1948, I believe, as what the scholars would call part of the "interlocking directorate" managed by the Party.

This journalist had a schoolmate who was now a priest in a small town called Tum that boasted the oldest, if not the only, Romanesque church in Poland, and the journalist and his wife invited my wife and me down to spend the day there. We met early one morning and drove to the southwest about 2-3 hours from Warsaw. The priest guided us through the church and its tower, clearly an important archaeological site. Then we strolled around the town and the priest pointed out different things, greeting people all along the way. We repaired to the parish house and had a wonderful lunch and a really good conversation (my Polish was very good by then and my wife's as well). The priest described his life and his relationship to the parishioners and the townspeople, who he said would come to him for advice on all kinds of things, practical and not necessarily religious, such as farming questions and other things. He said there was a Party cell in the town, which I would guess contained 1,000 souls. By his description he was in daily competition with the Party chief. So on this day I had a chance to see how it goes on the ground, and from all these experiences I came away with a conviction that the Polish church played a very important and not insignificant role in the ending of communism.

I just remembered one other anecdote. On two occasions I met with Cardinal Wyszyński and American visitors, serving as interpreter. The Cardinal's chef de cabinet, the priest I mentioned earlier, arranged the meetings with the Cardinal. The first was for Rabbi Schneier and a Catholic bishop whose name I can't recall from the Appeal of Conscience Foundation that's done a lot of ecumenical work in Eastern Europe. The second one was Senator James Buckley, William's brother, who was then a senator from New York. For me it was a wonderful opportunity to participate in a conversation with an eminent religious statesman for an hour or so about politics, religion and communism and the whole East-West struggle. I recall vividly that Cardinal Wyszyński commented once about the strategy of the Church, emphasizing that "we do not fight the communists" on ideological grounds, where we know that they're a failure and that our people believe that too. We fight them every day on the ground to demonstrate that their system cannot put bread on the table. And if we're able to do that we will win. This really struck me as a self-evident but very wise approach, and the way he articulated it with supreme conviction was compelling.

It also recalled my readings in Poland about the Church and its history. And in the medieval period when the Polish kings were elected. They did not have a divine right tradition, so when a king died the nobles would get together and choose a successor. That practice introduced lobbying from outside powers through relationships developed between the noble families and the German states, Russians, and others that contributed ultimately to the downfall of Poland by the late 18th century. During any period of interregnum, between kings, it was traditional that the Primate of Poland, the archbishop of Gniezno, serve as the interrex to manage the country so to speak during the interim. Well, the latter-day Church of the postwar period personified by Cardinal Wyszyński, Primate of Poland, believed and acted as though it was the lawful interrex and the Communists were interlopers. They felt argued and acted as though the Communist government was illegitimate, not approved by the people, and that it was their responsibility to somehow shepherd the country through this period until a legitimate administration came into being. And I think that conviction, that very firm belief, insofar as it was conveyed down through the ranks and throughout the country, provided tremendous strength to the Polish people, the Catholics certainly, who were resisting the regime mentally and in other ways.

Q: And it probably was conveyed through these homilies and- were the churches around the country full, empty?

SEYMOUR: Oh, they were quite full, often to overflowing. I remember strolling around Warsaw one Easter to an awesome sight. The holidays in Poland were awesome, anyway, in the original sense of that word. People were standing outside the many, crowded churches, listening on loudspeakers to the mass. In Warsaw that Easter people packed the main streets, walking from church to church in their tradition of processing and bringing baskets of food and things to offer and have blessed. It was the custom to visit seven churches. So walking downtown, we saw people just processing, spilling onto the streets and slowly moving from one church to the other.

This was a big contrast with Yugoslavia where church holidays were not officially observed so that even Christmas Day there was a regular workday. One sort of amusing thing in Zagreb was to see that some people going to the Christmas tree stands to buy their tree after Christmas; they were diehards Communists would ostentatiously making a statement by getting a "New Years" tree.

But in Poland all the holidays were officially observed, Christmas, Easter, Corpus Christi, Ascension Day, All Souls Day. In addition, one of our Embassy colleagues who had studied the Warsaw Pact armies observed that the Polish Army was the only one with a chaplains corps. In contrast the Catholic and other religions-Orthodox, Muslim-in Yugoslavia, were under considerable restraint. They were divided and suppressed by the regime. At least from the Yugoslav partisan point of view they had emerged from the war very much tainted. The archbishop in Zagreb was under house arrest for a good bit of the time in the years after the War, facing allegations of collaboration and this sort of thing. But in contrast the role of the Polish Church during World War II is, I think, unblemished from the standpoint of resistance to the Germans. There is a controversial aspect of it in terms of relations with Polish Jews and their treatment there before and during the War. The record on Polish anti-Semitism is spotty and very controversial, but there is no question the Catholic Church and many priests supported the Polish resistance during the war and continued to do so in the years immediately afterwards. As a result, the Church emerged with great strength in Poland.

Q: This is the second session with Jack Seymour. It's the 10th of March, 2004, which is about almost five months after our last session, and at that point we were talking about your assignment to Warsaw as a political officer, 1973 to 1976. And I think as we finished the other session we were talking a little bit about Church-state relations and issues related to the role of the Church in Poland.. You want to kind of continue from there?

SEYMOUR: Yes, I'm not sure I have the proper segue but I also followed Polish foreign relations. The political consular, Jack Scanlan, concentrated on bilateral relations and of course overall supervision of my work. It was essentially a two-man office, and I focused on internal things and a large part of that was Church-state relations because the Church was the opposition, if you will.

Besides the Church I also worked a lot with the lay Catholics in the "Catholic intellectuals clubs", they called them. These groups formed another part of the opposition, working, sometimes testily, but generally hand in hand with the Church. The KIKs, in the Polish acronym, were located in all the major cities-Poznań, Kraków, Katowice, Gdańsk. They were often writers, they ran newspapers, they were young students, they were just interested in politics and they met periodically. They also supported and in a way formed the political base for the Catholic groups in the Sejm. The Polish parliament actually had several seats for different non-Polish United Workers Party groups like the Peasants Party the socialists and so forth. I mentioned ZNAK, the main one for the Catholics. It was relatively free, though politically restricted and censored. There was a lot of infighting among these smaller parties and differences over how much support they should give the regime on this or that issue.

Q: How do you spell ZNAK?

SEYMOUR: Z-N-A-K. ZNAK in Polish means, I believe, light or sign, as in maybe symbol. And a lot of the lay Catholics who were publishers or otherwise involved in politics would sort of rotate in and out of these ZNAK seats. One person I met with frequently and had to our house was Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who at the time was the editor of a monthly called Wiśnik, or "link, connection," was detained, I believe under martial law in 1981 but went on to become prime minister of Poland in the early Solidarity era. He had been a deputy in the parliament, a member of the ZNAK group, and was now editor of this monthly magazine which I used to read regularly because there were important articles in it reflecting Catholic views. I came across it while working on the Polish News Bulletin, one of my duties at the Embassy.

The Bulletin was a joint venture of the British and American embassies to produce same-day translations of the daily Polish press and also an appendix or longer section dealing with periodicals and journals. One of my co-editors on the Polish News Bulletin, by the way, was the current ambassador from Britain to the United States, David Manning, and he and I worked together on problems of paper. Her Majesty's stationers were to supply the paper for us and at one point the British were in bad straits and were curtailing their supplies. David came to me with a sad face to say that they could no longer supply the paper so we had to do that and various other things to pick up the slack.

Q: Who did the translations for that bulletin?

SEYMOUR: Well, we had a staff of 10, I think, eight translators and two typists. These were Polish nationals, David and, later, his replacement, Andrew Carter, from the UK Embassy shared the job with me, in rotation, of coming in early in the morning, 7:00 or 7:30 and reading through the press and selecting articles and portions of them to be translated. We would give them a quick edit and hand them to the translators who would do their work and then the typists and it generally hit the streets in the early afternoon. Most of the embassies in town and also a lot of businesses in Warsaw and some down in Germany subscribed. It was a very prized product, perhaps a bit rough but not bad and quite timely.

Q: How many pages roughly?

SEYMOUR: Oh, probably about between 30 and 40.

Q: Oh. Subscribers would pay?

SEYMOUR: Yes, they did pay. I forget what the rate was; not terribly expensive. I don't think our Embassies made much money from it but it was quite a little enterprise.

Q: And, I'm kind of interested in this because I think it's fairly unique to do something like that for distribution at that particular time; it probably doesn't exist now. Maybe it does.

SEYMOUR: Maybe it does, I don't know. I'd be interested to know, actually.

Q: Did the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, FBIS, which does a lot of that sort of thing in Washington, did they get a copy or?

SEYMOUR: Probably they did. Once a week we would package up and send them to people who weren't so interested in the immediacy of it but just for the record or whatever.

Q: And would it be sent back by cable to Washington or by-?

SEYMOUR: No, it wasn't. Possibly today it would be. It was not sent back by cable but we did mail a package back once a week or so to the Polish desk in EUR, and we often drew on it for our own reporting for the ease of it. We could smooth out the translations and incorporate portions in our cables. It was a lot of fun. In addition, the editor of the news bulletin from our political section was also the press briefer at the Embassy, which created a little bit of friction with USIS (United States Information Services) from time to time.

Q: Because there was probably a press attaché¹/₂ there.

SEYMOUR: Yes, there was a press attaché¹/₂ there and-

Q: Press briefer for?

SEYMOUR: For the morning meeting that the Ambassador had each day with his country team to go over the day's events, pending actions, and so forth.

Q: Senior staff meeting.

SEYMOUR: Yes, the senior staff meeting was held every morning at, I think, 8:00, and I would brief on the press. You know, here are the main stories. I have lots of memories from those sessions, the people who were around the table, and the language education I got from Ambassador Davies who was a stickler for hyphens and proper pronunciation and usage. As I would be giving my summaries, he would offer his corrections, not of the Polish but often of the English! I would go back to the office and look it up and like as not I would find that the word I had used or the way I had pronounced it was not necessarily wrong but perhaps the second or third preference in the dictionary. So at a certain point I concluded that I was speaking some sort of dialect. But it was a lot of fun, there was a lot of personality stuff there; he also corrected the others, often in humorous ways.

For the first year of my three-year tour they allowed me to remain for the whole meeting, but that ended, I believe, because one of the other section chiefs, possibly a new arrival, objected. After all, they did not have their staff there and so I can understand why they asked me to leave after my briefings, which took about 10 or 15 minutes. It was a highlight of the day for me, though, and it also led me deeply into the press, so I was really reading a lot, not only from the daily press but the periodicals and books sometimes...

Q: Because you would also identify those for the press digest, press- the bulletin.

SEYMOUR: Yes. Yes, I would. And sometimes I would point out an interesting article in this or that periodical on a subject of interest to us. I did most of my reading of the longer material on weekends.

Q: I wonder if we could come back a little bit more to the discussion of the Church and to the extent that there was opposition at the time separate from the Church. Did you see much of that? I mean, I don't really want to talk too much about Solidarity in the future but did were you seeing the beginnings of that?

SEYMOUR: Yes. There was opposition of various kinds and two major issues during that time, the mid-1970s, that galvanized people. One was the question of the economy and the price rises and the other was the question of changes to the constitution, essentially a political issue. Dwelling on the constitutional issues for a moment, I would have to research details but I recall that the regime was playing a kind of double-game. On the one hand, they were reaching out aggressively to the US and Western Europe for financial assistance, including bank loans, to modernize the economy, but in doing this, they also sought to placate Moscow by shaping up the Polish communist system where they could because of its anomalies. I mentioned previously that they actually had chaplains in the military and that they celebrated the Church dates, Christmas and Easter, All Souls Day and I believe Corpus Christi and Ascension Day were actually holidays as they are in many Catholic countries in the West. They also had stopped forcing collectivization in mid-1950s in the face of strong opposition by the farmers, so a large, I believe the greater, portion of agriculture was in private hands. The plot size was restricted but private farming was tolerated. Similarly, about 15 percent of commerce was in private hands, again on a small scale with various restrictions but still private and, indeed, flourishing.

Q: The Church holidays were national holidays?

SEYMOUR: Yes, national holidays. They had long since given up the effort to collectivize agriculture, and they tolerated a certain entrepreneurial class too, while periodically passing a wealth tax that sort of leveled them off. So in general the regime seemed to want to straighten this out and there were a number of different changes to the constitution that they proposed and that were being debated and discussed quite vigorously among the public. Ultimately, they were put to the vote in the Sejm and passed with one dissenting vote, and it was one of the people from the ZNAK group, a very distinguished gentleman whom I knew and whose name I should remember but will have to look up.. His dissent created quite a storm, because such a dissenting vote was so rare, I think I heard that it had not happened since the early days of Communist rule. It brought him scorn from the regime side and acclaim from the Church and Catholic intellectuals.

Another issue I remember is that they wanted to put something specific in the preamble about their relations with fraternal Russia or Soviet Union or something like that, and that really got the nationalists, and the Church people, and many others upset. Because the Constitution had no mention of the Soviet Union, inserting such a reference was regarded as an affront to Polish sovereignty. Even though it might be recognized as a confirmation of reality, it really hit a lot of people very hard. Free Poland enacted a Constitution in the late 18th century a few years before it was gobbled up by its neighbors and that day November 3, I believe, was commemorated in many minds as the Polish national day, though not of course by the regime.

The constitutional reform effort thus antagonized many proud Poles and tended to bring normally disparate groups together. so there was a period, nearly a year, during which all this discussion was going and opponents of the changes were rallying together, I don't mean rallying in the streets but conducting heated discussions, trying to develop ways to head this off. Different groups began to emerge, some quite nationalistic, and we in the Embassy were getting a sense of the depth of opposition. The whole diplomatic community was abuzz watching all this going on, and, comparing notes, we tried to work out what it all meant and where it might lead.

We had three different regular meetings that took place roughly monthly. There was the NATO-ambassadors meeting, and then of course there was also an EU ambassadors meeting, which was one of my first introductions to the way the EU was beginning to coordinate views and policy. We would hear that their meetings were almost like preparatory ones to the NATO ambassador meetings in Warsaw, and I learned later serving in Bonn and in Brussels that this was very much the way the EU worked. They had an extensive, parallel coordination and discussion process to that of NATO.

Anyway, in Warsaw, there were also monthly meetings at the DCM level of the NATO or Western ambassadors; I believe the Australian may have been included.

And, finally, there was the "secretaries meeting" of first and second secretaries. This was a slightly larger group. I remember the Australians were definitely involved and some others. And then from that group we formed a less formal periodic luncheon of this Western-oriented group and Asian representatives from countries like, India. Japan, and others in Asia. I believe it was our Australian colleague who suggested that. So through all these different circles we tried to compare notes and share information about what was going on. One of the typical things would be briefings about high-level visits from one of our countries to meet with the Polish Foreign Minister or others. Whenever that happened, which was fairly often, our colleague from that country would brief us all on what was said, emphasizing of course what the Polish side had said. We did the same kind of comparing or sharing information, carefully, of course, about internal developments like the constitutional debates. We "secretaries" always felt our meetings were much more interesting, more informative, and a whole lot more fun than those of the DCMs and Ambassadors.

Q: Did you go along with the ambassador for his meeting or the DCM?

SEYMOUR: No, he would usually brief us afterwards and sometimes discussed agenda points beforehand, but he went alone. At any rate, it was clear even then in 1975-76, that a more concerted, though still fragmented opposition was developing in Poland. A couple of years later when I was on the Polish desk I recall we used to have brown bag lunches of four or five people in Washington who followed Polish affairs, usually CIA, INR, the desk, maybe somebody from Treasury or Commerce.

We all felt that it was interesting in Polish history that the farmers had revolted and protested in 1956 and more or less stopped collectivization; the students and intellectuals had demonstrated in 1968, and the workers in 1970-71 succeeded in helping push then First Secretary Gomulka out. The question, we thought, was when would all these groups get together? If they were ever to coalesce, we came to believe, then the regime and the system would be in real trouble. We saw the beginnings of what led to the creation of Solidarity while I was still there, and it came to a head in the next big development on the economic side.

A second issue, apart from the one of changing the constitution that I mentioned, was the economy. After the riots over price rises in Gdansk in 1970-71, the new leadership froze the prices on meat and basic foodstuff. As it continued that freeze year by year, it got itself into a situation where every year there would be rumors and questioning about whether this was the year they would lift the freeze? Everybody or at least the economists realized that they had to do that; they couldn't keep the prices artificially low because of the economic distortions it. There was a tremendous amount of gray-market or black-market dealing especially in meat. People would come to apartment houses with satchels of meat and sell them because there was little or no profit at the official, controlled price. This led to shortages on the official market, but through the active black market, people who had money and were well connected could get plenty of meat and other goods. I remember one contact telling me that someone came to his apartment regularly and, even when he did not need the meat, he bought some because he feared the vendor might not return if he refused.

Anyway, the economic pressures were really building up and every New Year, already in 1972 and '73, when I arrived, and in '74, '75, and '76 the rumors and questions about a price rise would fly about, and the regime would announce no price rise, to the relief of the public and consternation of those who knew the score.

I left on or near the day in June 1976 when the price-rise announcement was finally made. It provoked protests throughout the country including, some violent ones. I believe a train was blocked and some cars overturned. And then there were mass arrests of workers who had taken part in the protests, and some farmers too, but I think, mostly workers. The intellectuals, lay Catholics and dissidents like Jacek Kuro?, who had once belonged to the Party, established the "Committee to Defend the Workers (KOR)," which provided legal assistance and other assistance to families of jailed workers. This was the beginning of the coalescence at least between workers and intellectuals that we later talked about in Washington and led four years later to the events in Gdansk that brought Lech Walesa to the fore as a leader of the Solidarity and a more or less united and powerful opposition formed that included the farmers as well.

There were many intermediate developments along the way that built into the movement. Samizdat publications began to proliferate and a historical education movement from the days of Poland's occupation by the three European powers was revived in a new form, the "flying universities" that were run secretly around the country to teach alternative history and other lessons. But all this I was following from the Polish desk in Washington.

While still in Warsaw, though, I gained an important insight from a journalist about the potential for further trouble in Gdansk. It was, in the summer of '75 and the Poles were having the Seventh Party Congress, which became known as "Gierek's Congress," because it formally consolidated his power as First Secretary and celebrated all his achievements, especially in the economic area, which were accomplished with substantial Western loans. This was a year before the disaster of the price rises, but all seemed well at this point.

During the Congress the Washington Post's Eastern Europe correspondent Dusko Doder, who had come to Warsaw for the event, stopped by my office. He said there was nothing really going on there, so he told me he was thinking of going up to Gdansk and interviewing some of the workers who had been involved in the uprising of the 1970-71 period and was that a good idea? I said well I think it would be really interesting for him to test the feelings there, because we hadn't been hearing too much from that quarter, about the shipyard workers or labor in general and had not sent anyone up there in a while-one of the limitations of a small embassy.

When Dusko returned, he told me some fascinating things. His interviews were all arranged by Interpress, which was the Polish official handler for journalists. At his request they arranged a session with workers in an apartment of one of the workers, and there was an Interpress official accompanying Dusko, partly helping with the interpreting but also keeping watch, I am sure. I know Dusko speaks Serbian but I don't think Polish. Well, he came away amazed at the latent hostility he heard from the workers: they told him the workers had "shed blood" once (in 1970-71 at Christmas time), and if "'they' don't shape up" the economic conditions, "we will do it again." Dusko wrote a really good story about that, which was the first mention that I heard of the problem looming for the regime from that quarter. Of course, in the coming years came the price rises, the strikes and arrests, the formation of KOR, the ensuing underground opposition, and then the emergence of Solidarity, spurred by those very workers in Gdansk, that's how it developed.

There was an interesting aspect to the price rises too. The regime was trying to go very carefully in the way they did that. At the end of 1975, the rumors started again that there would be price rises and then no, no there wouldn't be, but the regime would study it carefully. In the spring, according to what we were hearing, they sent down through the party ranks for discussion three options for the increases, low, medium, and high. They were using the party as a kind of focus group to see what the "people" would tolerate. But, of course, the party members, even the rank and file, were not "the people," and, according to what we heard, the party types on the factory floor, in their party cell meetings said, yes, let's go for it, go for the big one. So the word was sent back up the line to the party leaders, who thought they had consulted the people and, in effect, had a mandate. So they went for the big one and then all hell broke loose. And that really was an event that you could put down as a benchmark on the road toward the dissolution of the Polish party and the coalescence of opposition among the workers and the intellectuals and later the farmers too in the Committee to Defend the Workers (KOR) who had demonstrated against the price increases and then were thrown in jail. KOR was established and supported by many intellectuals and opposition groups to raise money for workers' families and voice their outrage to the regime. This provided the organization that led to the Solidarity movement and organization under Lech Walesa.

Q: Now, to what extent did you have, I think you've talked some about your contacts with journalists and this magazine editor and you must have had contacts in the party, the communist party. Did you have many contacts with labor, agricultural workers, farmers?

SEYMOUR: For us at the Embassy it was mostly indirect, but we did have a fair amount of contact. One of the things that I did was to go frequently to journalists representing those different constituencies. Most of them, even the farmers or "peasants" and the military and others had periodicals and publications. They were supposed to be the "transmission belts" of regime policy, but they also expressed concerns and viewpoints of their respective constituencies and were in touch with them. For example, there was a military periodical, a daily I think, called *Zołnierz Wolności* ("Soldier of Freedom") and another that represented military veterans. I remember going to meet an editor there when I wanted to get a sense of veterans' views about relations with Germany. Polish-German relations were still rocky and an important issue for us to follow. Relations had only been reestablished in about 1970 or 71, and there were still many questions for the two to sort out.

One had to do with compensation for war veterans, and I did get an eye-opening view from my visit. I called cold and found the editor to be younger than I expected. I was struck by the vehemence of his anti-German feeling. He himself had not been in the war, but he remembered being pistol-whipped by a German soldier in Poland as a boy and that stuck with him. He later went into the service and now was editor of this veterans paper. That experience brought home the depth of feeling from the wartime period and the fact that it was not only grown-ups at the time and now the older generation but also many of the emerging leaders who still bore the scars.

I also had regular meetings with the foreign editor of the peasants daily, whom I have mentioned, and some contact with youth organizations through their journal, and with social democrats, who were also allowed a small party in the Sejm and their own publication representing small businesses.

Our consulates had more direct contact with people and organizations like those I've mentioned. Sometimes there was tension between the embassy and the consulates over who had the most fun in the sense of being able to get out and do things with the people. We were probably watched a bit more closely at the embassy. Oh, maybe that's not true. But it was mainly the bureaucratic life at the embassy as everybody knows that made it harder to get out; it was like that between the Consulate General in Zagreb and the Embassy in Warsaw when I served in Yugoslavia, as I have mentioned.

I did have fairly regular contact with some of the quasi-government organizations, a foreign affairs think tank and also with officials at the Party school or think tank. The last was especially interesting for insights into Communist doctrine, building socialism and advancing through the stages to Communism and the ranking or grading of the various "socialist states" in that theoretical linear progression. Discussions with one or two individuals there also gave me a better grasp of some of the terminology use in party publications and the press, which I was of course reading constantly. This was important in trying to understand the significance of some of the nuances in the "proposed" changes to the Constitution during that period of "debate" that I mentioned.

Q: Were you, you mentioned that you were watched or you had to be aware that there were certain boundaries that you probably couldn't go beyond or shouldn't go beyond or if you did go beyond you might be in some kind of jeopardy. Was that a real concern? You know, certainly I know officers at embassy Warsaw probably before your time, after your time were PNG'd for presumably doing things that the regime didn't accept.

SEYMOUR: It was something that was, let's say, present, and I recall having a little bit of a possible touch with what it would have been like to be in Moscow with dissidents. I think it was a lot rougher there. I've heard from colleagues since who had the dissident beat in Moscow that they had to be very careful so as not to endanger the people they were meeting and also not to go over those bounds you mention. Some of our officers there were roughed up or had their car broken into and things of that nature. I did not experience anything like that and I don't know that anyone at our embassy did during my time. We were under surveillance from time to time, and people we met or had to the house told us of being questioned afterwards. Still, it was a relatively stable period and a good period in US-Polish relations compared with earlier times and later ones during martial law, for example.

There was trouble in the air by 1976, but up till then, among other things Gierek had instituted a "turning" to the West and there was a lot of trade going on, a lot of American bankers were visiting, making loans which eventually had to be rolled over I think, and businesses and whatnot. We were pushing that, and the Commerce Department was pushing it and so there were, I think, restraints on the Polish government. They didn't really want to jeopardize this cooperation. So things weren't so tense, politically, as they probably were over in Moscow. So it wasn't a serious problem.

But we were watched, the phones were tapped and we had evidence of that. One thing was what we called the "bed check" where, especially if you had been away for awhile, even just down somewhere in Poland for a few days, for the first three nights at 10:00, say, the phone would ring with nobody on the line. Then it would ease off. During the time when President Ford visited, all the embassy staff were at their posts into the night throughout much of this, including a lot of work for two or three weeks beforehand, and the spouses were home, and, phoning each other, they discovered that the phone lines were all connected one way or another, so that one would pick up the phone and get the living room of another. We attributed that to inept phone monitoring. Also, once during an American school party in a restaurant downtown an unscheduled "photographer" appeared and took some flash pictures of the Americans.

One thing too, I know, people who would come to the house would mention that they had problems. We would often invite people over to watch American movies that we got through the USIS. Occasionally our contacts told me they had been interviewed by the police afterward and asked who was there, what went on, what did we talk about, and so on. We were also openly tailed by car when we would drive someplace out of town. I remember one funny incident when we were driving on a vacation to Gdansk and we had a two-year-old in the car and police began following right from the outskirts of Warsaw, quite openly. Sometimes it would be a car or a motorcycle and as one would drop off another would come up and to take its place. I stopped to get gas near the huge Malbork Castle not far from Gdańsk and the police car followed me into the station but parked on the other side of the building there. When I had to move around to another pump, he started up, but popped back in "hiding" when he realized I wasn't really leaving yet. It was just obvious and silly. But it reached its pinnacle when we were looking for parking and were caught in traffic and our two-year-old had to go to the bathroom. So I stopped the car and hauled him over a parapet and down to the riverbank. That policeman, "militia" man, got out of his car, walked to the riverbank, and looked over the wall to see what we were doing just at the right moment. I looked up and saw him peering at us over the wall. With a look of disgust, he bolted off, got in his car and left, but I noticed that the Polish people all around were staring at us, and I think the real purpose of this and similar surveillance or questioning of our houseguests was really to intimidate us and the Poles and circumscribe our contacts.

Q: The "militia man" was satisfied then.

SEYMOUR: He was satisfied. So we had that sort of thing, but nothing really scary. I don't know if I mentioned it, when I went to Poland I was pulled out of language class about a month early to replace urgently an FSO in the consular section who had been sent home by the embassy because he had gotten into an affair with the blonde tennis "pro" the embassy had. The Department was very disgusted with him. It was late spring, and the embassy was shorthanded, so they asked if I could come early to help bridge that gap and, of course, I did.

Q: The gap was in the consular section?

SEYMOUR: Yes, I spent about three months there, which in fact was excellent preparation. I was annoyed at having to leave the language class a month or two early, but it was good for my language and it was also good because of the opportunity to meet regular people seeking visas-farmers, students, truck drivers. I remember being impressed by one visa applicant who, if he was honest, was making pretty good money in a short-haul trucking business. We talked a bit about that and I thought it was quite interesting and it was my first introduction to how clever the people were at organizing things to get what they needed to survive despite sometimes terrible shortages of basic consumer goods.

Q: The informal economy is developing, yes.

SEYMOUR: Informal economy, yes.

Q: You mentioned some private trips and the trip to the village where you interacted with the priest. Were you able to travel quite a bit or were you pretty much confined to Warsaw by work and small political section and so on?

SEYMOUR: We traveled as much as we could but it was difficult. And a couple of times when I was new in particular and they were trying to give me a quick orientation that I took official trips in the country. Early on, for example, I accompanied our new consul in Poznan on his own trip to the north to pay calls, meet officials, and get to know his district. It was in the summer of 1973, and there were the shortages of oil because of the Arab embargo over the Yom Kippur War, I believe, and long lines at gas stations in the US and Western Europe. Well, the Polish officials we would snicker about that and tell us they were "insulated" from any of that kind of difficulty by their supplies from the Soviet Union, which in the long run proved unfounded.

Q: Yes, that was related to the Middle East and OPEC and price increases and shortages.

SEYMOUR: Right. But to your question, we didn't get around as much as we should have or as much as we would have liked, I think, mainly owing to the press of embassy work, the constant meetings, handling of visitors, the reporting we were doing from our vantage point, and, for me, the regular weekly duty with the Polish News Bulletin.

Q: How many consulates were in Poland at the time?

SEYMOUR: We had, when I first arrived, only one, in Poznan, in western Poland. While I was there a second consulate, in Krakow, was opened, and that was a very good thing because Krakow was an interesting and important area with a lot going on and some differences in attitudes, interests and perspectives from those in the capital.

Q: Including with the Cardinal there at the time?

SEYMOUR: Yes, Cardinal Wojty'a, who became pope, was from there; it was his area; he was the archbishop. It was very good and I think fortuitous that we had a consulate there in the two, three, four maybe years before he became pope.

Q: Presumably, the consul had gotten to know him. I assume he was a very important figure in the city.

SEYMOUR: Yes, the consul did. It was Vic Gray who opened up the consulate and he called on Wojty'a early on and developed a pretty good relationship with him. The U.S. representative was an important person for Cardinal Wojty'a.

Q: Okay. I want to talk about Poland's foreign policy, which was, I guess, your other main responsibility. But before we do that is there anything else on the domestic side that you want to talk about?

SEYMOUR: I mentioned Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the editor of the monthly Wi?? whom I saw, I'd say once a month, and had to the house at least once. He became very involved in Solidarity and later became prime minister of Poland and made an official visit to the US. Well, he taught me about censorship in Poland by explaining how he had to work with a censor to get his publication through with all the articles intact as much as possible. Every month he had to submit a draft and would often meet with the censor, he told me, to figure out various ways to get around whatever problem the censor decided the regime would have with his material. So he would figure out ways to phrase things to satisfy the censor but with significant meaning when read between the lines. He was a very wise, clever, and interesting guy.

Q: Okay. You want to turn to foreign affairs?

SEYMOUR: Sure.

Q: Maybe a little bit about how you went about that responsibility and I want to be sure that you discuss not only President Ford's visit to Warsaw but the CSCE, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in Helsinki in 1975 and to what extent that was something that you worked on and how significant was it in Poland in the period that you were there. So those are some questions to talk about.

SEYMOUR: Well, on foreign policy I think what was most important for us was Poland's relationship with the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc and Poland's relationship with the West. It was difficult to get information about the relations with the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact countries, but not impossible, and regarding the West, probably relations with the Federal Republic of Germany were most important.

The two countries normalized their relations in about 1970, that is, opened embassies and generally sought to come to terms with what had happened in World War II. This was symbolized in Chancellor Willy Brandt's Kneefall, as the Germans called it, when he famously knelt before the Warsaw Ghetto monument. So there was a new German Embassy in Warsaw, and the people there when I arrived say three years later were ending their first tours. There were many issues left over from the War that they were resolving, and one of those most interesting to me had to do with the school textbook question. I've often thought about that in the context of similar problems that I was later familiar with in Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia.

The Germans and Poles established a formal commission to harmonize how their respective textbooks described each other, especially in historical terms. This was a mixed government and private commission, how private the Polish representatives were is questionable but they were ostensibly historians and educators on both sides, and their task was to come to agreement on issues like how the names of the towns would be expressed on maps and in textbooks. Poznań was Posen in German, for example, Wrocław was Breslau, Kraków, Krakau, Gdańsk, Danzig, and so forth. Many of the towns and cities had both Polish and German names because of the vicissitudes of history. They worked out systems of using both names, one in parentheses on maps and in textbooks and they agreed on texts to describe their histories, removing or softening offensive or contentious language.

There was some watering-down of history, I'm sure, but the point was to try to teach the history and write about the history in ways they could agree on and that would promote understanding. It was a very, very difficult process which took years, as each side had neuralgic points and each government had to deal with segments of its population that felt very strongly about what had happened to them during the Nazi era and the postwar period. I don't know, really, the outcome of it but both sides were very serious about promoting it officially. I knew someone who was involved as an advisor to the German side. He was a German citizen born in Poland who spoke both languages and knew both cultures quite well. At the German Embassy he was the interpreter for many high-level German visitors to Poland. I think the textbook reconciliation effort was a worthy cause. It's hard to escape the fact that there are two views of history, but it was a good to try to come to a common understanding and presentation, especially for elementary and secondary school levels. I believe the Germans also did that with France and, indeed, developed many cross-cultural activities, exchanges, and the like by which those two countries over many years achieved a kind of modus vivendi and reconciliation including through their close cooperation in the European Economic Communities.

The Poles also had special relations with France and with Italy. In trying to find out about Polish relations, certainly with the West, our first contacts usually were the diplomats from that area. We would go farther to the foreign office, the foreign ministry, but they were usually very unhelpful. Then there were the journalists. This was one was one reason why I had so much contact with the foreign editors of the different newspapers: they would always be following these issues and were fairly open, though not completely trustworthy in a sense. We also focused on the journalists as IVP candidates and things like that. They would come back extolling their visits to the US but saying that they would have to pay for it and we were going to have to pay as well: for the next few months, they cautioned, you'll see that I'll be writing some things about the visit and the US that will perhaps set your teeth back, but I have to do that to prove my reliability. Even with those caveats, though, talking to the journalists was one way to get a particular insight into Polish government attitudes and policies.

Q: Would you ever have much contact with the foreign department of the communist party?

SEYMOUR: Yes. I had fairly regular contact with one or two people who were worked there, and Ambassador Davies was quite determined to meet periodically at lunch, usually in his residence, with Ryszard Frelek, the Party secretary in charge of foreign relations. A lot of our good information came from those meetings. It was interesting also because the wives got to know each other too; the ambassador designed the format as an informal, social one including spouses. He once commented that in one of their meetings Mrs. Davies asked Mrs. Frelek if she belonged to the Party, and her reply was, "Oh, no, no, no, one Party member in the family is enough!" I think it came up in the context of Church. I believe Mrs. Frelek might have mentioned going to Church, which prompted Mrs. Davies to ask. It reminds me of another little joke that the Poles used to say that Party people need extra travel expense in their pensions because when they retire they need to be able to travel to the church in the next town.

Q: Because they can't go to church in their own town.

SEYMOUR: Yes, they would be recognized there. But I think probably the better information that we were getting, for example, about the foreshadowing of events or developments in regime policies, whether domestic or foreign, was coming in this way from Frelek and his relationship with the ambassador. Ambassador Davies spoke very good Polish, and I'm sure that helped immeasurably.

He had served in Poland as one of his early assignments. He was there right after the war from about 1945 to '48 and gave us some really interesting insights from that period. He was also rather intellectual and knowledgeable about the country in a deep sense: he went to the movies; he read the books and so on. I recall one time when I was included in a lunch he had for a visiting American journalist, from the Des Moines Register and five or six Poles, including the editor of Politika, one of the big political figures, Mieczyslaw Rakowski, who later became prime minister, too, during the last days of the Party. Well, we were talking about a movie showing in Warsaw at the time called Ziemia Obiecana (Promised Land) from a much earlier book by a well-known Polish novelist of a century ago about what you might call the industrial revolution in Poland in the 19th century. In talking about the movie around the table with these Poles and a couple of other Embassy officers, it turned out that the ambassador was the only one who had read the book, and he gave a rather impressive critique comparing the movie to the book. I think even Rakowski, who had not read the book, was impressed.

Q: And the ambassador had presumably read it in Polish?

SEYMOUR: In Polish I'm sure.

Q: I want you to go on a little bit more on some other things but you said it was difficult to find out very much about Polish-Soviet relations.

SEYMOUR: Yes. And actually I have one little insight into to convey that illustrates the constraints. I won't say who the American was; I used to take Polish journalists from time to time to a journalists and artists club that many of us and our contacts belonged to a popular artists club called Spatif a few blocks from the embassy. It had really good food and good atmosphere. On this occasion our new political counselor showed up with his Soviet counterpart unbeknownst to me and caused a quiet stir among some others there.

Q: To replace Jack Scanlan.

SEYMOUR: Yes, he had recently replaced Jack Scanlan and soon got into difficulty on two counts. One was this occasion. He had recognized as a bit of a deficiency that we didn't really know enough firsthand about the Soviets and what they were about in Poland. He was right in that, and he started trying to remedy the situation by reaching out to a Soviet Embassy counterpart. I knew he was going to go to lunch with this guy that day but he didn't say where, so when I showed up with my Polish contact at Spatif, this club, my boss was there in a far corner, which I noticed after sitting down. My contact had noticed it too, and asked what in the world was he doing there with that Soviet official. My contact, a journalist for Polytika, who had been to the US and was a really solid contact, really grumbled about that $\frac{1}{2}$ te- $\frac{1}{2}$ te- $\frac{1}{2}$ te, didn't like it at all and what it symbolized, the US and Russia colluding. I passed this reaction to my boss and he was better about it in future, and he did get a few interesting reports from it.

The lesson here was that yes, we needed the contact, but we needed to be discreet about it, because the Poles would see and wonder what the heck was going on here. You're supposed to be with us and what's this? And so it generated suspicions and things of that nature. Plus, I was not a Soviet expert, but I suppose the Soviets could get the wrong idea as well. I don't know. But I think it was a deficiency. And the only real link we had into it, I think, was probably through the ambassador because he had served in Moscow and also had been responsible for Soviet affairs in the Department before coming to Warsaw. Possibly, he could have established some contact in an appropriate context, but it was obviously tricky.

Q: There's a Russian Soviet enclave in Poland that's surrounded by Poland?

SEYMOUR: Yes. Kaliningrad. As part of German East Prussia, it was known as Königsberg. It has been a problem, because it was taken by the Russians after World War I, I believe.

Q: I think it's entirely surrounded by Poland and Lithuania, but in those days it was not a big issue.

SEYMOUR: No, no it wasn't a big issue.

Q: Did you talk much about the Baltics?

SEYMOUR: Yes, actually quite a lot because the Poles were trying, as part of their policy, to get involved with the Baltics. There was a Baltic cooperation initiative during that time that included Poland and Scandinavian countries and, I believe, the Soviet Union to address environmental and maritime issues affecting the Baltic Sea littorals. The Poles emphasized it quite a lot, and it may still be going on or probably has evolved into something else. It indicated Poland's interest in cooperation that could be expressed more easily through the European Union and regional initiatives that included Western countries and de-emphasized Soviet involvement.

Q: Now, how about the CSCE (Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe) and the Ford visit and all of that? To what extent were you involved? How significant were these various things?

SEYMOUR: Well, I guess the most substantive way I was involved was in the very tedious task to compare the text of the Helsinki final act, the English text with the Polish one, because you remember all participants agreed to publicize the text in their countries. The Poles published the full text in several of their big newspapers shortly after it was signed, and we wanted to ensure that it was a faithful translation, so I compared it literally word by word and found that they did a good job. There were a couple of sentences where they used words that softened it somewhat, but it wasn't actually wrong. It was just that with a choice of several words they used a softer one. We reported that, but, as I recall, we concluded that they had done pretty well okay.

Another way I was involved was through a French journalist who introduced me to a Russian, a Soviet citizen who was a writer was able to come out to Warsaw after the Final Act had been concluded and things had loosened up somewhat. The man was a writer and dissident, and I remember his saying at one point that it was because of the Helsinki Final Act that he could come to Poland, but it would take much more for him to be able to go to the United States. Somehow or other the subject of the book by Andrei Amalrik *Will the Soviet Union Survive 1984?* arose and I said I had read it and actually had a copy at home. The writer implored me to let him borrow it and so at a subsequent meeting I gave him the book, not expecting really to get it back.

In this man's view anyway, the Helsinki Final Act made things a little bit easier, and it demonstrated the importance of continuing to press for movement, sometimes in little steps, to push for progress and improvement in conditions for the people in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe and in relationships with them. As an embassy, we were trying to carry out such a policy just to keep pushing those little steps as best we could to get them to relax restrictions on the media, travel, reunification of families and overall human rights.. And then eventually events occurred which enabled things to move much faster.

Q: You want to say a word about President Ford's visit after Helsinki? I think he came directly to Warsaw or?

SEYMOUR: He came directly from Helsinki and actually he went to Krakow first, which was a very an important and interesting thing. I can't remember what all he did there but it's possible that he met with Wojtyla, for example, and certainly with local leaders. He might have visited the university. I know he had a good program to see such things and meet such leaders. He was good on walking around.

Then he came up to Warsaw where we had been involved in the advance planning for several weeks beforehand. The Embassy officers had different events to "control." It was very hectic, so it's sort of a blur now, but I remember that there was a really good feeling overall about the visit. The Poles were very impressed, pleased, and delighted, and he was very good. There was a walk-about, where he walked down to the main, historic and renovated square near the old Castle, which was fully packed with people. We had beforehand checked out a little shop with the advance team where the plan was for him to pop in to buy a souvenir or something. So they picked out a shop a day or so before, and the advance team, including security scouted it out and talked with the proprietor through me and explained what would happen. They asked if she could have some things laid out, lace or something, and the proprietor and her assistant were very excited. Unfortunately, in the event, the square and street were packed right up to the entrance to the place. Although the advance assigned to the spot beckoned and spoke by radio with those escorting the President, we were within sight as the entourage moved by through the crowd 10-20 yards away, but it was impossible for them to move the President any closer to the shop. Standing at the doorway a little above the crowd, I could see his aides trying to push through the crowd, a little phalanx of officials, but they were swept on beyond the shop, much to the disappointment of the lady to whom I had to apologize, but she could see what had happened and that they had tried.

Q: You had to buy a trinket or two yourself, probably.

SEYMOUR: And the advance man, too! It was a fun visit, I remember that, and we of course worked very hard. As it happened my parents were there; they had planned the trip months before the visit was even decided. I hardly saw them; my wife had to host them more or less single-handed except for a couple of very late dinners. They were due to leave the same morning as the President, but the airport was closed for four or five hours. As I recall, when the wheels were up on Air Force One, I was finally able to turn some attention to my parents and see that they got off too. Actually, I think they were interested, intrigued by all the commotion and a chance for a glimpse of what happens when a President visits a foreign capital.

Another interesting thing, about a month later we got a letter from some Pole down in the south complaining bitterly that he had been arrested because of the president's visit. He wrote that he really liked America and so he wasn't going to hold a grudge, but he asked only one thing: that the next time an American president plans to visit Poland, to please give him six weeks' notice so he could head for the hills. I don't know who that was or whether he was being ironic, but, if true, it shows the lengths countries like that go to control official visits.

Q: I'm not sure there have been, well, there have been other presidential visits to Poland but not in awhile.

SEYMOUR: No, not in awhile. I know things have changed a lot there since then.

Q: Dramatically. Okay. Anything else you want to say about your time in Warsaw?

SEYMOUR: I can't really think of much more during my time there, but there is an epilogue of sorts in that I was assigned to return to the Department as the Polish desk officer and was delighted with that. On virtually the last day at our farewell party as the ambassador was bidding us goodbye, he told me he had heard that they were going to make me the Yugoslav desk officer. He only explained that there was some kind of a personnel problem in Yugoslavia and they wanted to switch desk officers. He wanted to give me a heads-up but could not explain further. And sure enough, that's what happened. I was very disappointed because I had really gotten into Polish affairs and the developments and people involved and was looking forward to continuing with it for another two years. After one year on the Yugoslav desk, though, they let me, as they had promised, go to the Polish desk with a year's extension, to serve there two years, as planned. It didn't make sense in a way, but that's what happened, and, actually, things were pretty interesting that year on the Yugoslav desk, and I learned a lot there and was able to continue later in Polish affairs.

Q: As a desk officer?

SEYMOUR: As a desk officer, and later in my assignment in Bonn I also followed Polish-German relations, and had further contact with Solidarity and other events in Poland. But if we go chronologically that should wait until later.

Q: Yes, we can either do that or maybe finish off, I know it's a little unusual but maybe keep talking about Poland at this point and then go to Yugoslavia next. Would that be alright?

SEYMOUR: That would work, yes.

Q: Yes. Why don't we do that? So then in '77 you became the Polish desk officer in Eastern European Affairs.

SEYMOUR: In the summer of '77 after the one year hiatus. On the desk, I remember working a lot with the Polish American community. In fact, someone had told me that would be 50 percent of the job, which turned out to be true. It was a very active community that sought close contact with the State Department and the government. I felt very well prepared for this, with good credentials, having served in Poland and being comfortable with the language. I think ideally that's the way it ought to be, that the desk officers routinely have such preparation. I feel sorry for people assigned to a desk who have never really worked in the country. In fact, during the time I was the Yugoslav desk officer, Alan Thompson, who had been in Yugoslavia and was ideal for the Yugoslav desk, was having to learn about the Polish desk without speaking the language and without any real background.

Q: And not having served in Poland.

SEYMOUR: And not having served there. And it was sort of a strange thing. But he and I worked together pretty well. We had a mutual interest in do so, and I believe that was effective. I might add that Alan is a very fine person and good colleague whom I had actually met before joining the State Department, in the mid-1960s when he was a junior officer at the US Mission in Berlin and I was a young army officer there with an interest in the Foreign Service. He and a couple of his colleagues took me under their wings to show me a little what being an FSO was like.

But continuing, I recall that the Poles were keenly interested in policy.

Q: The Polish American community?

SEYMOUR: Yes, Polish Americans. They also had a big difference from the Yugoslav Americans I'd been dealing with the year before in that they at least accepted the idea of Poland, whereas the Yugoslav Americans, mostly, considered themselves Serbian-Americans, Croatian-Americans, Slovene, whatever. Many of them did not accept the idea of Yugoslavia and didn't like that the American government recognized Yugoslavia and "did business" with Tito.

To illustrate, I remember trouble from a letter I wrote about the Polish border, which relates to Helsinki a bit. The question came in a brief letter from a Polish-American somewhere in the US, asking why the U.S. does not recognize the Polish borders (with Germany and the USSR). I cannot remember exactly the details. I believe I drafted a forward-leaning letter mentioning the lack of a final peace treaty from World War II but noting that, implicitly, through the Helsinki Final Act's language about not changing borders forcibly that we had signed on to, we did recognize the current borders de facto. Well, the German desk insisted on inserting a phrase that we could not recognize the borders unilaterally because this would preempt Allied, Four Power obligations and authority stemming from the absence of a settlement over Germany. The desk contended that to formally recognize the borders unilaterally would have ramifications for Four-Power rights and relations with the Soviets. In retrospect, this illuminated some of the issues that would arise later with the "Two-Plus-Four Talks" on unification of Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

In any case, the reply that went out contained rather firm language along those lines tending to dilute my point, but I heard no more about it until sometime later.

Q: This was to an American citizen?

SEYMOUR: To a Polish-American, probably a citizen, or at least ostensibly so.

Q: Polish American. Okay.

SEYMOUR: And-

Q: Next thing it was in a newspaper?

SEYMOUR: Well, next thing it was in the foreign ministry in Warsaw. A few months later I went with John Kornblum, who was then in charge of CSCE issues, as part of a delegation making a round of bilateral consultations with CSCE participants in preparation for an upcoming review conference. John was later director of Central European Affairs, Ambassador to the FRG, and, ultimately, Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, but now he was doing the CSCE circuit. He was going for bilateral talks with the Poles and as desk officer I went along. The first day we discussed the Helsinki Final Act and progress on divided families, and other obligations in the so-called human rights basket and the other two-general relations and military confidence-building relations. And that was all fine, but when I got back to the embassy, there was a call there from the foreign ministry, the America desk: would I please come by?

Basically they were "calling me in" and would only tell me it was something to do "bilateral relations." So we arranged a time; I went the next day, and John Kornblum was interested and fortuitously came along. When we got there, they showed me this letter and asked what it means that the U.S. does not recognize the Polish border? And John, well steeped in German affairs and possibly recalling the letter we had received, gave them the explanation about Four-Power rights and not pre-empting a postwar settlement with Germany. These officials were not happy with that, but there was little they could say, really.

Later, there was a lot of dithering about the border recognition issue in connection with the Two-Plus-Four Talks, with the State Department lawyers saying it had to be resolved in the discussions. However, at the political level no one had any difficulty, and all sides realized that the borders would be recognized, the Germans not least. It was more a question of process. In the event, President Bush cut right through the dithering, though, in the fall of 1990, I believe, when he was asked about it at a press conference following talks with the visiting FRG Chancellor, Helmut Kohl. He simply responded that "of course, we recognize the Polish borders," and that pretty much took it off the table for the ditherers.

Nevertheless, the Poles wanted to be involved, and I don't know if you remember, but there was a special meeting late in the process in which they were included at the foreign minister level. Their sole concern was the border and how that would be treated and to make sure it was clearly confirmed and recognized. It was obviously not a problem for any party, though, so the meeting with the Polish Foreign Minister was by way of a formality to please them, which was important.

Q: Gave them an opportunity.

SEYMOUR: Gave them an opportunity to feel involved, recognized, and treated appropriately. They could then go to their people, whatever they needed to do and feel assured about the border. But I'm getting ahead chronologically here; the Two-Plus-Four Talks occurred much later at a time when I was deputy director of the Office of Central European Affairs and we did much of the work to staff the US participation in those talks.

Q: Anything else about Poland?

SEYMOUR: Well, another incident which I have remembered was the interpreter problem. If you remember when President Carter went to Poland and there was all this about the interpretation of his arrival remarks into Polish. Well I don't know if you remember, but the interpreter's name was Steven Seymour.

Q: I didn't remember that.

SEYMOUR: And so when I came into the office the next morning, having seen what happened on television the night before, my phone was already ringing like crazy. This, by the way, is a little bit of an involved story because there's more to it than is known.

Q: Go ahead.

SEYMOUR: One of the first calls was from Jim Healy, a staffer for Congressman Rostenkowski, Rostenkowski who though he later got into difficulties was then one of the several Polish gurus in the House of Representatives. Well, when I picked up the phone, Jim exclaimed, "Oh, thank God it's you and you're here and not the one with the President in Poland. I did get some flak from the Polish community: first of all, how could "we" muck up the interpreting anyway and secondly, was it that desk officer we know named Seymour?

During the course of the day, another call I got was from Dusko Doder, whom I mentioned earlier, the correspondent who met with workers in Gdansk. He was now back in Washington and had called home because he wanted to know all about it and couldn't get through to me. He, too, thought it was me. My wife, Marshall, told him it was not me, which relieved him, and he asked how he could get through to me. She knew Dusko also, as we had had him to dinner in Warsaw, so she called me and somehow got through, perhaps on another line and told me to call Dusko. When I called Dusko he wanted to know what was going on with this flap over the interpreting and asked me all about it. Then when he realized the mistaken identity issue, he asked if he could somehow help out, and I wasn't sure, so he suggested he could write a little story about this to try to make it clear. So we talked and sure enough the next day in The Washington Post there was this story about it, very nicely written, which had the effect of making it clear that it wasn't me and rather making light of it. That's the only time I ever made the State Department daily briefing by name, by the way, because the spokesman, responding to questions, also assured the press that it was not me who had done the interpreting for the President in Warsaw.

Q: The issue really wasn't about the quality but a bad choice of words? I can't remember all the details.

SEYMOUR: It was bad choice of words. There are several things; I'll try to do it quickly because it is kind of interesting but also complicated. First off, the ambassador himself, Davies, had wanted somebody else but that person was not available for some reason. So Language Services put Steven Seymour into it. The ambassador was perturbed, but there was little choice.

Q: This is Davies?

SEYMOUR: This is Davies, the one I mentioned who was a stickler for language and a good Polish-speaker himself. This was still a couple of weeks before, maybe a week before. I remember checking about Steven Seymour with Language Services, but they said he was one of their best in Russian and also had good Polish, so I wrote a cable to reassure the ambassador. And what happened, I think, was first of all Steven Seymour was very poorly treated as an interpreter and that was a big lesson for me ever afterwards: treat your interpreters well because they are crucial. By treating them well I mean giving them background material so they can get used to the vocabulary likely to be in play and the kinds of issues that will be dealt with and as much of an advance look at the texts of speeches and remarks as possible.

Well, Steven Seymour didn't get the text of the speech until the plane had landed and someone ran off the plane to hand it to him. For some reason he apparently did not travel in the President's plane. Secondly, and I remember this from watching television, he wasn't up on the podium behind or beside the President; he was down below on the tarmac while the President stood above him on a stand with microphones. I still have the image in mind from television of Steven Seymour, the interpreter, glancing up toward the President with a somewhat wild, desperate look and his paper in his hand trying to follow the remarks, so he could speak the translation into his mike. It was at 11:00 at night, too, dark and, I believe, raining and cold; it was December.

So he was badly treated. The errors in it were not so egregious as reported in our press. What Poles mainly objected to was not so much what Steven said the President said but how he said it. It was his Russian accent. He had been born in Russia, although he spent teenage years in Poland and that's where he acquired his Polish. But the Poles were concerned and didn't like the Russian accent. Then there was one word he used which was supposed to be in English something like "aspirations," but, converting quickly, he used a word (*zdziwienia*), which could be "aspirations" but also could be "lusts." An additional factor was that when the newsmen got back from the events late at night. Some of the Americans mixed with the Polish journalists who were buzzing a bit about this. There was one, in particular, I understand, named Jerzy Urban, who later became a bad guy in the Solidarity period as a regime spokesman or something, and he began playing up the interpreting as a terrible gaffe, which formed the big story for the American press that night.

After reviewing all this, the texts, I concluded it was not as bad as it seemed. It shouldn't have happened, though, and it could have been avoided maybe by prior thought and better treatment of the interpreter, a lesson I carried with me and tried to put into practice ever afterwards.

I felt very badly for the Polish-Americans, who were very upset by the incident, but there were some worse aspects of it that never came to light. One of the callers that morning was Steven Seymour's brother-in-law, I think it was, calling from New York. He wanted to verify that the interpreter had in fact been Steven Seymour. Because he knew that there was another one along. I confirmed that regrettably it was Steven, and he replied, "Oh no I feel so terrible for him. He spent Christmas with us and he was really nervous and worried that he wasn't up to this," because he hadn't been used in Polish in a while. I didn't say it but I thought a little bitterly, well, why didn't he tell Language Services then that he was not up to it.

Still worse, though: when we were putting together the reports of the official conversations in Warsaw there was a gap. We were especially interested because of the Helsinki agreement in the discussions that took place about divided families and the Polish reactions to particular cases that President Carter had agreed to raise with First Secretary Gierek. This he apparently did only during the 15 minutes of a $\frac{1}{2}$ te- $\frac{1}{2}$ te- $\frac{1}{2}$ te they had. The only other people present were Steven Seymour and a Polish interpreter. So I called Steven Seymour and asked if he done his memo yet, where was it, and what happened? He replied that he had not done a memo: "Nobody told me to do a memo." So I asked what he could remember and probed him about it to construct a record. I got a bit from him about it. Yes, they raised divided families but he didn't think by name, and yes Gierek said he would "resolve" the issues satisfactorily or expeditiously or some such thing like that. But that's all we got from what we thought was a very important 15 minutes.

Then the epilogue is that later I learned from Bob Beecroft, a colleague who had spent some time on assignment with the MBFR (Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction) and, later, the SALT talks, SALT I and SALT II, in Geneva. Bob said, indeed, that Steven Seymour was absolutely the best interpreter-in Russian-that they had for those talks.

Q: In Russian.

SEYMOUR: Yes, Russian. He was really superb, according to Bob. So all of this, especially that epilogue, has never come out to the public, and the poor guy was maligned because he was the wrong man in the wrong place. But he evidently did a tremendous job during really important negotiations for us. So there you are.

Q: I have to ask you, as Polish desk officer, to what extent did you, were you involved in things Polish with the national security advisor of the period?

SEYMOUR: Ah, yes. That was very interesting experience, too.

Q: This is Zbigniew Brzezinski.

SEYMOUR: He was known as the real Polish desk officer. He really paid close attention to our relations with Poland, but most of my dealings at the NSC were with Bob King, who I believe now works for Tom Lantos in the House International Relations Committee.

Q: He was on the staff.

SEYMOUR: He was on the staff and he would say, well Zbig wants this or that, or Zbig wants to do it this way, and so on. We had a pretty good relationship, and something I remember well about President Carter's visit is that Zbig was very keen that there be something with Cardinal Wyszyński. He wanted the president to meet with the Cardinal, the Primate, and Ambassador Davies was having a little trouble carrying that water because the Poles were resisting. He tried but reckoned they were adamant against it and did not think we should make an issue of it. I don't know whether he felt it was a deal breaker or not but he did come in with a cable saying let's work out an alternative. So what happened is that Rosalynn and Zbig went and met privately with Cardinal Wyszyński and I think that turned out fine.

Brzezinski was emphasizing a policy of promoting pluralism in Poland and other Eastern European countries and differentiating among them according to their diversity, pluralism and relative political independence or loosening of their ties with the Soviet Union and that they were implementing reform as best they could. This was our approach to Eastern Europe in general. And he wanted that meeting with Wyszyński to sort of play him up and emphasize the political diversity in Poland and that we regarded the Primate as an important representative of the people.

Zbig was also in close touch with the Polish American community; he was one of their heroes, especially after he had been appointed to direct the NSC. I had met him in Warsaw a couple of times and, of course, earlier in the State Department. I remember in particular a lunch with Jack Scanlan and Brzezinski and me. And to hear him talk in English was something (I had earlier heard him lecture in college, too), but he goes twice as fast in Polish, and a lot of it was in Polish. It was a very interesting lunch, but I had to strain to keep up with him.

Q: Because there were Poles there too.

SEYMOUR: Yes, I think there was one Polish intellectual leader there; I'm not absolutely sure-this was about 30 years ago! But that's why so much of the conversation was in Polish.

Thinking who the Pole probably was there reminds me of another later incident involving Jack's successor as political consular. Again, I won't use his name but one could figure it out, I suppose. The story illustrates the close communication between the Polish-American community and their friends in Poland. I had been there a year or two years before this man came and replaced Jack, so I was pretty well grounded and had a number of contacts and new many of Jack's. In those first weeks, I arranged a few lunches with some of them for my new boss and arranged one with a man named Stefan Kisielewski, one of the Catholic intellectuals of the older in generation, had once been in the parliament, wrote frequently for the Catholic weekly Tygodnik Powszechny, and was highly regarded in those circles. I believe he was the one at the lunch Jack Scanlan had for Brzezinski. Jack's replacement had served in the FRG and I believe on the German desk, and "Kisiel", as he was sometimes called after a pen name he used, also spoke German, but at that time I did not, or not very well. Anyway, they got going in German and about Germany because Kisiel had spent formative years there. And they got talking about Jan Novak, who had served many years as director of the Polish section of Radio Free Europe in Munich and later as President of the Polish American Congress

Q: Of the-?

SEYMOUR: Of the Polish Broadcasting for RFE (Radio Free Europe). And they got going because the political consular had apparently known Jan Nowak also from his days in Germany, and for some reason he mentioned something about Nowak's having been a "Treuhandler," meaning a trustee for property, in this case for Jewish property, and in what could be taken as a negative way. Kisiel reacted testily and the conversation got rather loud, to the point where people at other tables were beginning to look around at them, which I tried to signal to my boss. Now, this was before I went to language school to get to a 3/3 in German and a posting in Bonn, and eventually a 4/4, so I did not follow the flow of the conversation that well, but got a sense of it. About a month later the DCM came running into my office waving a letter that had come, I believe, from Brzezinski or another prominent Polish-American citing the conversation and saying that Kisiel had been deeply distressed that the political consular held a negative attitude toward the chief of the Polish broadcast service for Radio Free Europe, etcetera, etcetera. And the DCM asked what I knew about this, because I was mentioned in the letter as being a "nice guy" but not in the conversation.

Q: Present but _____.

SEYMOUR: Present but not participating or following the conversation in German. So I of course told the DCM what I knew, and, as I recall, I was able to pull out a brief memo I had done to record some points Kisiel had made about Polish politics, which my boss would have seen as well. The DCM had to respond and he took my information and also conferred, of course, with my boss. The truth of it, as I saw things, was that my boss, in fact, seemed to hold Jan Nowak in high regard but had foolishly introduced the "Treuhandler" business, which was probably based on rumor anyway, and that set off Mr. Kisielewski. That's how I saw it and that's how I recounted it to the DCM and later informed my boss.

That incident was really unfortunate. It showed the pitfalls of working in that environment, and it actually goes back to another Foreign Service insight. When I went about preparing to go out to Poland, studying the language at FSI, reading, and talking to people who knew Poland, everybody told me I should see Irene Jaffe. I don't know if you know or remember; she was a long-time INR analyst and kind of a guru there and certainly for anything Polish. And so I duly went up and saw her and we had a good lunch or something and she told me about the politics and so on. She said she wanted to leave me with three bits of advice, and I hope I remember them all. The first one was try to understand, just try to understand what goes on in the life there and the politics. Second was never talk about one Pole to another Pole. And the third was to enjoy, because it's a wonderful country with wonderful people and fascinating politics. But that second point is where my boss fell down, and I guess I should have been kicking him harder under the table because he simply fell afoul of that rule and the result proved its importance.

Q: Yes, the second one was violated. Okay. I think we ought to stop here. We're right at the end of this tape and we need to go back to Yugoslavia, desk officer, beginning of '76 when we get together next.

Q: This is the second session of an oral history interview with Jack Seymour. It's the 19th of May, 2004. And Jack, I think when we finished our previous session we were going to talk about your assignment to the Office of Eastern European Affairs; this was in the period about 1975, I guess.

SEYMOUR: Actually '76 to '79.

Q: Okay. And the early period was on the Polish desk and we're still to talk about the Yugoslav desk. We talked some about the Polish desk assignment.

SEYMOUR: Actually the first year was on the Yugoslav desk because of that special personnel problem in Belgrade.

Q: Why don't we finish things Polish first.

SEYMOUR: Okay.

Q: But maybe start with the overall policy approach we followed toward Eastern Europe in this period which, as it turned out, was near the end of the Warsaw Pact and the Cold War and so on.

SEYMOUR: Well, one of the things that was instituted and I do not know exactly when or by whom, but I think it was in the Carter administration, as Zbig Brzezinski, the national security advisor then, focused intently on Eastern Europe in addition to relations with the Soviet Union. I think it was he or at least during this time that the policy of "differentiation" was developed. Not that it necessarily was a whole lot different from what we had been doing but it had a name and a concept. "Differentiation" was intended to signal that we differentiate in our relations with the individual countries of Eastern Europe, fine tuning our relations with each according to three criteria. As I recall, those were how pluralistic and open the country was in its political and social structures, how "democratic" or tolerant of diversity and respectful of human rights as discussed in the Helsinki Agreement, and how much independence it showed with regard to the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact.

Romania, for example, was a very tight society internally, and not very pluralistic, but it was showing a lot of divergence or independence in its actions from the Soviet Union. So it had most-favored-nation treatment, for example, which was reviewed annually but nevertheless waivers were granted so it enjoyed MFN until I think the late 1980s. Poland was internally rather diverse with several different political parties represented in the Sejm although they were pretty much controlled, the Peasants Party and the lay Catholic parties. Also it had, mostly, private agriculture-the farmers had resisted the collectivization in the '50s-and it had a fairly sizeable private sector, some degree of private business that was allowed to flourish, at least to survive. This was, I think, partly to make things easier socially and politically. The people in Poland did have an upper class before the war and a lot of wealth. The regime allowed a certain amount of private enterprise to continue, while every now and then lopping off "excesses" through a one-time leveling tax. I recall such a leveling during my time there, when anything over a certain level of income and assets was taxed heavily to cut the "plutocrats" down to size. They weren't happy but could do nothing.

I recall once going to a ball at one of the hotels, the Europa Hotel, I think, invited by a Swiss colleague and his wife. It was absolutely amazed to see the wealth on display there in this communist country. At our table we met entrepreneurs; one I remember specialized in importing cut flowers through connections in Holland and elsewhere in Europe and would making frequent runs there. Another made or traded in ladies' handbags and other rather elegant leather goods, keeping the ladies of Warsaw supplied through his connections. They both filled an economic, social niche, and did well by it themselves. Talking to them was quite eye-opening as an insight into how a certain element of Polish society lived.

Q: Your point about the differentiation policy not being new but in many ways being a continuation of our approach over many administrations and decades reminds me that one of the first tasks I had when I came into the State Department in the Economic Bureau in 1958 was to be kind of the notetaker and minute keeper for talks with the Poles about economic assistance. And one element very much was the private farmers and their role and obviously we had high regard for that and that was partly our justification for giving assistance.

SEYMOUR: Right. And I think we looked for opportunities to emphasize and promote that sort of thing, as for example during the visit by President Carter and the meeting his national security adviser and Mrs. Carter had with the Polish primate to emphasize the role of the Church.

Q: I think we did talk about that last time, yes. One thing you did mention after our session last time and I don't know if you want to say a few words about this would have been in the context of Poland, your time on the Polish desk after the Yugoslav desk. You were involved with some divided family cases and I don't, perhaps this would be a good time to say a few words about that.

SEYMOUR: Okay. Well, this was an outgrowth of the Helsinki Final Act and the whole process of developing CSCE or of putting the agreement to work for our interests. I recall the US was initially opposed to the whole process of security cooperation in Europe, as the negotiations got going in, I believe the late 1960s, suspecting that it was meant only to confirm the postwar boundaries there, which I imagine the Soviets had intended all along. They or their Warsaw Pact allies first proposed it, if I remember right, and we were suspicious and reluctant, thinking that it was going to simply confirm the division of Europe. But we did go along and we did sign it and then came the question of implementation. One of the chapters or baskets, as they were called, Basket III on human rights, specified a whole range of standards such as journalists' access, openness to the press, freedom of immigration and in particular the category known as divided families where all signatories committed themselves to helping to reunite families.

Well, we began to use these commitments to press the Poles and other countries, including the Soviet Union, to resolve the divided family cases, to allow relatives freedom to leave their country to reunite with either American-citizen or American-resident relatives in the US. Over time, this developed into quite a bureaucratic process. We had, I think, something like 300-500 cases. These were people who had petitioned or approached the U.S. government, often through their congressmen, to get the US government to help resolve their cases. Embassy and consular officials often met with the relatives in Poland, the subjects of the petition, for visa processing and to get details of their cases, as did our colleagues elsewhere in Europe, and we in the US would be in touch with the petitioners, so we got to know their situations pretty well.

We then took these cases up with Polish officials in all sorts of venues in Poland and in the US. We submitted long lists with explanations and arguments about the case and invocations of the "Helsinki" commitments. Because of the volume we attached priority to some of them and tried to make big pushes periodically. I can't recall exactly what the criteria were for putting them on a list and presenting different lists but it had to do, I think, with the poignancy, you might say, of a case, with the timing of the applications, any special humanitarian elements, that sort of criteria. But it also involved a lot of bureaucratic processing.

At that time we had a relatively new department or bureau for humanitarian affairs, which had responsibilities for refugees and following human rights around the world and also these human rights cases under the Helsinki Final Act. This Bureau, HR, pushed these divided families very hard on principal, and we in the European bureau, the regional bureau, certainly did as well, but of course we were balancing a number of issues and interests in our relations with Poland too. The Policy Planning Staff also focused hard on these issues, and we all wanted to make Helsinki work for us, but there were sometimes tensions over the tactics. I remember in particular one member of the Planning staff who was deeply involved in the nitty-gritty, to the point where he was really implementing, not just planning, policy. I don't know if I should name names.

Q: Sure.

SEYMOUR: Phil Kaplan.

Q: Oh yes.

SEYMOUR: He later went on, I think, to be DCM in Manila. But he and I worked together and not always harmoniously on this issue. And I recall after an experience doing a divided memo from EUR and SP on some aspect of it and all of the difficulty I had with him, I vowed never to get into a position of being the drafter on a divided memo, either to have them do it that is to be the sender while we clear or, better, for us do it and they clear. But to do it together as senders when the disagreement was so great was not good bureaucratically or politically.

I recall having a difference with Phil over the meaning of Polish leader Gierek's "promise" to President Carter about resolving divided families cases. During the Carter visit to Poland, as I mentioned, we planned to press hard on human rights. There were several meetings on the issue, and there was that one $\frac{1}{2}$ te- $\frac{1}{2}$ te- $\frac{1}{2}$ te between the two leaders with only interpreters present. Divided families cases were raised in each and lists were turned over to the Poles, but, as I mentioned earlier, the interpreter did not prepare notes from the $\frac{1}{2}$ te- $\frac{1}{2}$ te- $\frac{1}{2}$ te, so the best we had was the report I prepared from my telephone interview with him a week or so later when he tried to reconstruct the exchange. Nevertheless, we did have that memorandum and possibly from other, larger meetings where Gierek in his own words promised "to resolve these divided family cases expeditiously."

Phil Kaplan took this to mean that they were going to let all these people go, but we on the desk, in the office of Eastern European Affairs and in EUR, were skeptical about that. We felt that the proper interpretation of his words was that he had promised they would give us answers quickly to the cases we raised, to "resolve" or decide them. And sometimes those answers were "no." This got Phil Kaplan very upset and he said we needed to go back to the Poles and tell them that they were "reneging on a promise, a personal promise from the first secretary to the president of the United States." And there was a heartburn over this problem, because Phil took that and made more of it than what I think was warranted, but he argued that it's in a memo, we have his exact words, he made this promise and now he's going back on it. So we need to consider cutting assistance or aid or whatever. I cannot recall, if I ever knew, not being there myself or having a transcript, what Polish words were used in the discussion, but here we were having an internal difference of interpretation over what came to be the official English version. I believe how it really wound up is that we would not follow Phil's view but simply persevere on each case.

As an illustration, there is one case where perseverance paid off that I feel very happy about. The perseverance involved going over each case or taking a careful look at the circumstances and in this particular one realizing that it was not a divided families case because it really involved a dual national and someone with an American passport who had visited Poland and was trying to leave to return to the US. She had gone back to visit an estranged husband who was ill in some way and then she wanted to leave to return to her other family in the States; I don't know whether it was children or what. And the Poles were holding her passport and not giving her a Polish one. She had been on a high priority list we kept giving them for a couple of years, from before I returned to the Department, and I am pretty sure it was on the special list raised by the President with Gierek but the answer had come back, again, negative.

In the aftermath of all this I kind of took another look just looking through file, I realized that all that time we had categorized it as a divided families case under the Helsinki Agreement, whereas it was not exactly such a case, because she was an American citizen. It more properly belonged under the rubric of our consular agreement with Poland, which we had concluded two or three years before and which allowed for people who entered Poland with an American passport and Polish visa to be treated as Americans, and therefore they should be able to leave.

It was similar to dual national cases I had worked on in Yugoslavia, although the Yugoslavs were really much tougher. So I discussed this with a lawyer in the Legal Advisor's office at State, and he reviewed the file and confirmed my thinking. Using a wonderful word, he said if the Poles did not honor this right that the woman has under the agreement, then they are vitiating the consular agreement that we have. So I asked him if he would, as a State Department lawyer tell that to the Poles. Well we called in their chief consular officer, I think he was a counselor for consular affairs, and told him this and the lawyer backed it up and explained in legal terms. The Polish Embassy officer duly recorded it, seeming visibly a little agitated about the thought of jeopardizing the agreement, and promised to inform Warsaw. About a month later, Ambassador Spasowski came in to see, the Assistant Secretary, I think George Vest at that time, and he opened discussion by saying "I want to give you some good news on one of the divided family cases." I was taking notes and when I heard they were going to let this woman go, I really felt very gratified. She had been stuck there about three years, I believe.

One other personal thing about it, though, is that when it came time to list achievements for efficiency reports, I totally forgot all that because I felt it was just a normal work, not anything special and not really involved with political affairs. But later upon leaving the Polish desk I was asked by a former language instructor what I considered my main accomplishments and suddenly that was one of the first things that came to mind, and I felt very happy thinking about it.

Q: Did you get much political pressure from Polish American organizations or members of Congress or the so-called CSCE Commission?

SEYMOUR: Yes, we did, and we were actually able to use that pressure in various ways to point out to the Poles that people important to them were upset because they were dragging their heels and were not honoring their CSCE commitments. So that was good, and the CSCE Commission on the Hill was working very hard on these issues. What I did not appreciate was Phil Kaplan's approach, misrepresenting what the Poles had said and then trying to raise the bar on them in the bureaucratic tussling. But the rest of the pressure was very good and very helpful.

Q: Personalities aside, you know, the idea of the policy planning staff (SP) of the State Department first established by George Kennan was to look very broadly at long-term trends and issues, but this sounds like getting involved in a very specific diplomatic activity doesn't it? But I know that other instances like that have also happened with SP.

SEYMOUR: Yes, well, I don't think I was alone in this. We just felt that they were really exceeding their mandate, so to speak. And what was interesting is that, as I recall, we did not get a similar kind of pressure from the human rights people. They were very interested and we always cleared everything with them and generally they were approving or at, least, were approving the directions we were going in and the actions we were taking, and sometimes they had constructive points to add. But Phil just wanted to ratchet it up politically, I think really; he wanted to put the screws to Poles and made a big thing of this supposed "reneging" on a promise.

Q: Yes, I would think that the human rights bureau certainly has a valid reason for having a different point of view than the geographic bureau about how much focus or attention should be paid to a set of issues in the human rights area than policy planning, but I'm not quite so sure.

SEYMOUR: Yes, I think in SP at that time, or Phil anyway, had sort of lost sight of that long-range mission and were more into the details of supervising policy as implemented by the desk.

You mentioned Polish Americans and actually during this time there was quite an effort, I think, to reach out to them. In fact, we had an all-day conference at the State Department, and Al Brainard, who had served in Poland but was doing something different at the time, helped organize that and did a really great job. We had something like 400 people from all over the country and a full agenda of discussions. George Vest hosted the conference and supported the event very strongly even to the point where they had a signature wheel made for him for the occasion so that the invitations, probably close to a thousand, could go out over his authentic-looking signature, and he addressed the group at the opening. It was a very good affair that did a lot for our relations with Polish Americans. We were able to get across some things to them, and we listened to their views and concerns, and I believe everybody had a good feeling about it. We did have some follow-up to address some of their issues specifically and also worked to develop contacts we had made with the community. It was called Poland Day, I remember.

Q: Poland Day at the State Department.

SEYMOUR: Right.

Q: Hosted by the Bureau of European Affairs.

SEYMOUR: That's right.

Q: Okay. OK, now let's move back or on to your assignment to be desk officer for Yugoslavia in the Office of Eastern European and Yugoslav Affairs?

SEYMOUR: Yes.

Q: EEY. And that was '76 to '77?

SEYMOUR: Yes. From Warsaw I was paneled to go to the Polish desk, but when I arrived,, as Ambassador Davies had told me at the farewell party, they put me on the Yugoslav desk and moved the incumbent there to the Polish desk. This was because of what management called their "special personnel problem" in Belgrade in the form of the ambassador, Lawrence Silberman, who had been appointed, I believe by Gerald Ford, and had become very difficult in several different ways. I can't remember what I said about this earlier.

Q: I don't think you've said much about it, so go ahead.

SEYMOUR: Okay. I'm not sure how much I should say, though; it provides some insights into the politics of the Foreign Service. Essentially Ambassador Silberman was a very energetic fellow and he could have been a great ambassador as a political appointee, but in my view he chose to become an issue instead. Something he had done before I came to the desk was to appoint his own special assistant who became a shadow DCM. This polarized the Embassy and made it impossible for the appointed DCM, an old Yugoslav hand, to function. There were differences of style, for sure, and perhaps of political approach, I am not sure; I got different views from different people at the embassy.

At any rate, Silberman wasn't happy with the DCM but he did not get rid of him directly. What he did was bring in and engineer a foreign service reserve appointment for someone from the outside, a man named Brandon Sweitzer, a rather young, 38 or so, businessman, to serve as a special assistant or advisor to the ambassador. As soon as Sweitzer got settled, apparently, the ambassador began using him like a DCM, and this polarized the embassy, because there was a loyal group behind the incumbent, whose name was Miller, and then there were some who thought Sweitzer wasn't so bad. Eventually Miller left, and by the time I arrived on the desk, Sweitzer was de facto DCM, including to the point of serving as *chargé*, in charge of the embassy, in the Ambassador's absence, signing the cables and all. This meant that neither of the embassy's top leaders was an experienced career officer, let alone one knowledgeable about Yugoslav affairs. It also created a legal problem, because Sweitzer's name had not been sent to the Senate for advice and consent or confirmation and, as I learned, by law, I am pretty certain, a Foreign Service post must be in the hands of a commissioned officer.

Q: A commissioned.

SEYMOUR: A commissioned officer. So we had a situation in Belgrade that was a little bit out of the ordinary, if not, illegal or contrary to regulation, and the personnel people were dancing around that dilemma. They essentially had three options as Jack Scanlan, who was then head of personnel or administration in the Department, told me (Eagleburger was deputy undersecretary for management). They could put Sweitzer's name up before the Senate for confirmation, remove him or prevent him from serving as *chargé*, and, of course, just doing nothing. Since it was the summer before another election, summer of '76, you can guess which option they chose. I naturally had a lot of dealings with Brandon Sweitzer by cable but also in person when he came for consultations, and he was a fine guy, but it was a difficult thing.

Another incident that occurred before I came to the desk brought a lot of things to a head. In the fall of 1975, a Yugoslav American, actually a Hungarian ethnically from Vojvodina, on a visit was arrested and jailed on charges of espionage because he had been taking pictures of a sugar plant. He himself was in the sugar business back in the States, we learned, and he claimed that it was a personal interest. Well, he was held without consular notification or communication for about nine months. This was a big and serious issue, a violation of the very limited but specific agreement we had with Yugoslavia on dual nationals being allowed to leave the country with an American passport if they had entered with one and a Yugoslav visa. Such violations had been a problem when I had served as a consul in Zagreb, but none so serious as this. It also violated the Geneva Consular Convention, in our view.

Q: He was a dual citizen?

SEYMOUR: He was a dual citizen. We had a rather tenuous or too narrow an agreement between Ambassador George Allen and the Yugoslavs back in 1950 that was the basis for our handling of these dual national cases. The agreement, an exchange of notes or memoranda with the Foreign Ministry stipulated only that any national who entered with a Yugoslav visa in his American passport would be allowed to leave on the American passport. I think it responded to a situation where the Yugoslavs were seizing American passports and forcing dual nationals to either renounce their citizenship, which was a lengthy, complicated process, or to accept a Yugoslav passport, which most, those who came to us anyway, did not want to do. This limited agreement was a help but only partially and not in serious cases, like arrests, trials, and imprisonments.

Q: In 1950.

SEYMOUR: In 1950 we negotiated the "Allen agreement," but problems continued and were rife during my time in Zagreb in 1969-71 and later on the desk in 1976-77. A decade later, we negotiated a consular convention which was much better, but we didn't have that at the time I came to the desk in June of 1976, and this man's arrest, Toth was his name, was a very serious issue for us in our relations with the Yugoslavs. There were others too, but this was big. I don't recall the details of the earlier part of it, but by the time I arrived in the summer of, in June of '76 it was getting close to a year since Toth's arrest.

Silberman had been pressing his case hard at every opportunity, and the Department had also been doing so, but there was tension between them. Silberman was conservative and focused on Yugoslavia as a communist dictatorship under a strongman, while the Department, though recognizing that, was also pursuing the decades-long US policy to preserve and encourage Belgrade's independence from Moscow, so that in its handling of the Toth case it was probably balancing with other issues, but there is no question that the Department had raised it to the highest political levels.

One of the first things I did soon after arriving was to go to Niagara Falls for the unveiling there of a statue to Nikola Tesla, a Croatian-American of Serbian extraction who had done a lot of work with electricity in the early days, in competition with Thomas Edison. I believe Tesla actually developed the better method of using alternating current to transmit electricity over long distances. Finally he was getting his due with this statue of him at the Falls, and the Yugoslavs were all happy with that. Frank Zarb, director of the Energy Agency or commission or something like that—we did not have an energy department then—was going to represent the US government and make suitable remarks. Silberman had pressed very hard for us to include something about the issue of Toth's arrest and detention, and we in the department agreed to that, but there was a lot of back-and-forth on how strong the language should be. Ultimately, we submitted three alternative sentences to Henry Kissinger, the secretary of state, for him to decide, and I would like to say more by way of an epilogue about all this later on.

Q: I thought you were going to say that Zarb said all three sentences.

SEYMOUR: Well that would have been interesting too. Actually you were involved in all this at the time. But I forget which gradation of harshness Kissinger chose; I think it was somewhere in the middle. Anyway, I was assigned to go up and in effect make sure everything went right, which turned out to be making sure that Zarb really got it into his speech and said it. But surprisingly, and I think Kissinger was surprised, Zarb was actually reluctant. He told me he thought it was inappropriate and so on and he read it and questioned me closely, perhaps because of the somewhat last-minute nature of the insertion. He asked, "Who wants me to say this?" And I replied that the Secretary had approved it and wants you to say it, to which he questioned, "You mean Henry Kissinger? He wants me to say this?" Then he shrugged and sort said something to the effect that if Henry wants me to say it, then I will. So he did.

A few weeks later there was a meeting of the U.S.-Yugoslav Business Council at Lake Bled in Slovenia, where Ambassador Silberman was going to make remarks. He had drafted a very sternly worded section about Toth, and we at our level, the Office of East European Affairs approved it or something like it. I think it denounced the Yugoslavs for holding Toth; it did not mention Tito by name but was pretty harsh. Well, that morning the Yugoslav embassy called and told us they were going to release Toth, but it was too late for us to inform Silberman so that he might alter his speech. Because of the time difference, I think he had either already said it or was about to and we couldn't prevent it.

Months later, I asked the Yugoslav political consular with whom I worked rather closely about that and there's sort of an epilogue about him too because he is now a US citizen living in the US. But I told him then that we could not understand why you notified first the State Department, when the decision had been made to release Toth in time to notify the Embassy in Belgrade and the Ambassador before he addressed the meeting Bled. The political counselor responded that we didn't want to give Silberman the "satisfaction of getting the word from us. And I said yes but you realize that he might have dropped or altered his remarks, in which case you would have saved some further trouble in our relations. The political counselor just smiled and replied that they "did not want to give Silberman the satisfaction." The Yugoslavs did not care much for Silberman, and it did get worse. We wrangled over exactly when they would release Toth, because they rather took their time, about three weeks, in doing so. We wanted it to be done immediately but they stalled, claiming the need for things like medical examinations and out-processing.

They finally handed Mr. Toth over to US custody at the airport in Belgrade. The ambassador was there, greeted him, and put him directly on a Pan American flight to the U.S. Then the ambassador called a press conference. I think it had been known or the Embassy had informed the press that this was going to take place, so there were several journalists on hand, perhaps five to 10, including several from the American press. Speaking to them, the ambassador denounced Tito, the president, Marshal Tito by name for this violation of our rights Mr. Toth's rights in pretty hard terms. Moreover, he criticized, condemned, the "obstruction of the Office of Eastern European Affairs" for making more difficult throughout the episode his efforts to get the man released.

Q: Ambassador Silberman did?

SEYMOUR: Ambassador Silberman criticized the office by name. And that brought down the wrath of Congress, among others. I think Senator Buckley, James Buckley from New York called for a "blue ribbon commission" to investigate the Office of Eastern European Affairs and there was much press play about this. So we were thrown into turmoil for a month or more, responding to complaints, letters and calls from the public and Congress, writing press guidance, making lists of all the different times we had made demarches and to whom and all the times that we had sent out instructions to the embassy to make demarches and so forth. Virtually the whole office was involved, the directors and the other desk officers, one way or another in dealing with this.

Q: Of this particular case?

SEYMOUR: On this particular case. And in the course of all this, perhaps two or three weeks into it, there was an interesting and unusual development, which I think you remember and may have helped to arrange: we were all called up to see Arthur Hartman, the Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, one afternoon about 3:00 I think it was, the whole office, the director, his deputy, and everybody. Arthur Hartman talked to us a bit, making small talk really. About 15 minutes went by and we were kind of wondering why we were there and then the door burst open and it was Henry Kissinger coming down to the depths of the Department, so to speak, to give us a morale boost. He told us he admired our steadfastness, and he also appealed for us to hang tough and not to talk about it, because it would only make things worse. Then he promised that when the elections were over and the time was right he would "set the record straight" about Silberman. I think those were his exact words or pretty close. But he never did.

Four or five years later, though, when I was in the political sections of the embassy in Bonn, Kissinger, now out of office, came to visit the German capital, as he did once a year perhaps, to keep up his ties and test the mood in Germany. As a private citizen but with his bodyguards, he had meetings with Foreign Minister Genscher and Chancellor Schmidt. And either he asked for or we suggested an embassy tag-along and an embassy car. At any rate I was assigned to accompany him but, as they were private meetings, I was to sit outside.

In the car to the airport, it was evening by then, and the ride took about 30 minutes, he briefed me on the meetings and I took notes on what all they had said in order to report to the embassy. Once he had finished, after about 15 minutes, he settled back in the seat, relaxed, sat quietly for a moment and then asked, "Well now, where were you when I was secretary of state?" And I replied that I was on the Yugoslav desk. He paused: "Were you there when that nut Silberman was our ambassador?" I said yes I was. Another pause and then a sigh: "Well, you know, one thing I regret is that I never set the record straight on Ambassador Silberman." I don't know what I said in response but it was probably something like, "That's all right, we got over it." But I was thinking, "Yes, you son of a gun," but I did appreciate and admire his recollection of that.

Q: I don't know if it figures in any of his books; probably not.

SEYMOUR: I don't think so.

Q: I was the special assistant at the time of this to Assistant Secretary of State for European affairs Arthur Hartman, and I do remember that staff meeting of the Office of Eastern European Affairs conducted in Art's office and I was there, I was the note taker for the meeting. And I think I knew-

SEYMOUR: Well you probably knew exactly what he said.

Q: Well, I don't remember- somewhere in there is my record of that conversation and, you know, what you said is more or less what I remember, certainly the context. And I had forgotten exactly what had prompted it and the office director, was that Carl Schmidt at the time or was he the deputy?

SEYMOUR: I think Carl was the deputy and Nick Andrews was director; then later Carl moved up to be the director.

There is one other story that might be of some interest. One of the issues at the time when I arrived was the violence and the assassinations and so on against Yugoslavs, Yugoslavian officials. Three weeks before I got there the Yugoslav embassy had been bombed, that is a bomb exploded there in back of the building damaging a portion, and the Yugoslavs were naturally very upset and security was a big issue with them. There were various incidents I could mention but the main one, which had aftereffects and connections for me, was a hijacking of a TWA airliner that took place I think in about September 1976, a couple of months after I arrived on the desk.

When they found out it was hijacked by Croatians, I was called in the middle of the night and went down to the operations center. Larry Eagleburger was already there. In his capacity as M, Undersecretary for Management, he was also director of counterterrorism, so he was running the show there, and as soon as they learned that there was some Yugoslav connection, they called me in. They had learned that because the plane landed in Montreal and some of the passengers were let out and somehow identified the hijackers as Croatian. It was not a transatlantic flight but put down in Montreal to take on fuel, as the hijackers wanted it to fly to Europe to drop free-Croatia leaflets over London and Paris and then to go on to Yugoslavia to do the same. But the plane was forced down, or had to take on fuel in Paris, and was held at the airport, and ultimately our ambassador wound up negotiating with the hijackers at the airport. Our ambassador was Rush I think, Ken Rush. And we had only little bits of information about the hijackers. From the passengers who were let off in Montreal we learned that they called the ringleader by the name "Bushich" and among the three or four hijackers was a blonde American woman called "Julie."

I learned this when I went down for breakfast with the FBI man who had been sent over to the operation center for this crisis. The FBI was called in for a number of reasons and there were other elements to this. One was that the hijackers demanded that leaflets or a petition or something calling for a free Croatia that had been left in a suitcase in Grand Central Station should be released to the four major newspapers, The New York Times, The Chicago Tribune, The L.A. Times, and The Washington Post, which the FBI did early that morning, and it was published in at least one or two of those papers. Also in Grand Central Station for a reason I can't quite remember the hijackers had placed a bomb, a suitcase with a bomb, and a policeman or bomb disposal expert was killed in the process of defusing it. That made this whole thing a capital crime with a mandatory life sentence.

Q: Capital offense.

SEYMOUR: A capital offense, and that led to other things and the eventual trials and so on. But when I went down for breakfast and happened to join the FBI man in the line there, I asked him a little bit more about what was going on, what they knew about the hijackers and so on, and told me the ringleaders were a Croatian named Busi? (Bushich) and an American named Julie. That was interesting, because when I was in Zagreb in 1970 or '71 on the Yugoslav national day, November 29, two young women, Americans, were arrested for throwing free-Croatia leaflets out of the neboder, or "skyscraper," the tallest building on the main square there. They were arrested and that became a big consular case for us. One was Julie Schultz, who had been put up to the leaflet-throwing by a permanent resident from Croatia I think living in Cleveland, named Zvonko Busi?. When I mentioned that, the FBI man turned to me and said I think-

Q: Those are the two.

SEYMOUR: Those are the two. And it turned out they were. They were married now and I recall that somehow rather soon after talking with the FBI agent, I was hustled over to the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) operations center. There I encountered the man who has since written novels about such things, one called Op-Center, written with Tom Clancy, I believe. Steve Pieczenik was his name. He was a psychiatrist by training and an expert on these situations.

Q: Expert on negotiation, hostage situations and so on.

SEYMOUR: That's exactly right.

Q: University of Virginia.

SEYMOUR: I think so, but on contract to the State Department. Anyway, I was ushered in to see him and he sat me in an office there, closed the door and started peppering me with questions. He was trying to build a profile of the hijackers. I remember, for example, recalling the month or so that Julie spent in jail before her trial in Zagreb. She faced pretty severe penalties, as it was a rather serious offense in Yugoslavia at the time. She ultimately got a two-year suspended sentence and, I think, an expulsion and banishment from the country for a period. I recall my wife thinking that she had been up to no good and wasn't a naïf½ve thing as we were portraying her but knew perfectly well what she was doing and we had all been deceived by the young, naïf½ve blonde bit. This turned out to be true, but at that time she got off lightly.

Before the trial, though, we did all the normal consular things, helped get her a lawyer, visited her in jail, and delivered mail. She received quite a few letters, from a kid brother who made drawings and her father, a professor at Portland State. She was from Portland, Oregon, and she became rather emotional reading these letters, especially from her father. When I mentioned this to Pieczenik, he exclaimed, "Ah, a father figure," and later in briefing Ambassador Rush about how to negotiate with her, as she did the talking for the hijackers at the airport, he emphasized that the Ambassador should assume the air of a fatherly figure. Eventually, they did surrender, probably because they realized the futility of pressing further and perhaps were satisfied that at least their statement on independence for Croatia had been published in the press as they had demanded.

Two things happened subsequently by way of epilogue. When I was now retired probably in about the early '90s and Croatia had indeed gained its independence and opened an embassy in Washington, I went to an event at the Catholic University here, a roundtable discussion or something with Catholic priests and some others from Croatia. I was then following Balkan issues at the Atlantic Council, and I noticed that the list of participants included the press officer from the Croatian embassy, Julienne Busi?. I scrutinized the participants but saw no one who looked like her. Apparently, she didn't show up, or if she was there, she was much changed. I was rather stunned at the idea, though, for I did not think it was exactly appropriate that there would be a Croatian official whose husband is serving in the penitentiary and who had caused all this difficulty and had actually hijacked one of our airplanes. I told somebody on the desk-

Q: In the State Department?

SEYMOUR: In the State Department who explained that they were vaguely aware of this incident in the past but felt that there was nothing really that could be done. Now I understand she's back in Croatia, in Zagreb, doing something in public relations there.

In addition, I knew a journalist, David Binder and mentioned all this to him. He contacted Mrs. Busi? and learned that she had met with the widow of the policeman and had appealed to her on the basis of their common loss of husbands, the widow's when her husband died trying to defuse the bomb and she when her husband went to prison. The widow apparently did intervene somehow to try to get Busi? released or get time off, though apparently to no avail, and the two women corresponded a bit. They had a bond of sorts, and David Binder became really intrigued with that. He followed it up, as I said, with his interviews and wrote a story about it for the New York Times.

Q: Alright. You never know.

SEYMOUR: There were a couple of other interesting things. Would you be interested in a kidnapping and counter-kidnapping and legal advice and that?

Q: Yes. Let me ask you one question before we get to that. You had served in Yugoslavia previously.

SEYMOUR: Yes, in Zagreb as a consular officer...

Q: Okay. So that was in a sense your preparation for this assignment on the desk?

SEYMOUR: Yes. And I had studied Serbo-Croatian at the Army Language School for a year, about six years before, but the training at Monterey was very good, once I learned my assignment to Zagreb was official, I was in INR at the time, I used to go over to FSI on my lunch hour to brush up by listening to language tapes, for about three or four months before going out. Then one of the problems I had is that I had actually learned Serbian. Although there were a couple of Croatians on the staff at Army Language School it was mostly composed of former Serbian military. There was one fellow, I guess he was Montenegrin, whose claim to fame was to have flown the plane that took the young king to exile in London just ahead of the German invasion of Yugoslavia where he set up the government in exile in 1941. So these instructors were along in years.

But the post language program in Zagreb was really valuable to me when I got there and needed to adapt quickly to the Croatian form of the language. I'd like to make a pitch for language training at post, because I understand that, later, money was cut for these programs. For me, as one who had studied the language actually six years before, the training at post, perhaps three days a week, helped me revive it quickly. More important, it helped me to learn the Croatian variation, which was really essential. By six months or so, I was quite comfortable in Croatian. There's little real difficulty in understanding, but there are clear differences of grammar and vocabulary and it was only through the post language program that I could have picked that up so quickly.

Q: Now this period '76-'77 when you were on the Yugoslav desk in Washington, did you travel much to the country or pretty much stayed in Washington?

SEYMOUR: No, actually I did not travel, mainly because I was only there for a year and, coming from Poland, my plan and desire was to be Polish desk officer, to which the office agreed. I believe my only travel was to Niagara Falls for the Nikola Tesla statue unveiling that I mentioned. After the year they paneled someone else into the Yugoslav slot (it was Darrell Johnson), and I went to the Polish desk, as planned. I did travel a bit there, to Milwaukee, I believe to speak at the university and meet with Polish-American groups and to the Embassy and the Consulate in Krakow for consultations there. I had more experiences on the Polish Desk, for example the Poland Day and the other things mentioned earlier.

Q: And the reason you were put on the Yugoslav desk was basically to deal with a very difficult situation and perhaps your predecessor, they needed to move him out, or her out because of some of the problems with the ambassador.

SEYMOUR: Well, yes, I felt badly about that, frankly, and we can turn a little bit to some other things about the ambassador, but it was Alan Thompson, whom I had actually met before coming into the Foreign Service when I was in the army in Berlin. He was executive assistant to the minister there. He and Bruce Flatin, who was with the mission there, both coached me about getting into the Foreign Service. I took the exams in Berlin, monitored by Bruce. So I knew Alan a little bit beforehand. He was a friend, and he had served in Yugoslavia, before Silberman, but not in Poland, so when they switched him to the Polish desk and put me on Yugoslavia, we worked together a fair amount, helping each other. I felt very badly for him and I don't think it was really quite fair; however, I don't believe it affected him at all career-wise.

It was a very special situation. On about the first day I reported I was told to go up and see Arthur Hartman. He sat me down, and said essentially that we've got a real problem in dealing with this Ambassador because he sees in everything that we are somehow out to get him or to frustrate what he tries to do. The word was that Secretary Kissinger had apparently jokingly told Silberman when he was sworn in or at some point early on that he should watch out for those FSOs, because they will try to diddle you or some such thing.

Q: He took it seriously.

SEYMOUR: I think he took it seriously, but the problem was not with the desk. He said that himself to me later, adding that he was sorry it had caused difficulties for Alan or me. He said, "My problem" is not with the desk!" He really didn't think his problem was with Kissinger either; he thought he had Kissinger's strong support, which, I quickly learned, was not really true. His problem was with Hartman, and I never fully understood that, except that Arthur Hartman was his more frequent high-level interlocutor at the Department, I imagine. Anyway, Hartman told me that day about all this and instructed me, among other things, that I in clearing cables going to Belgrade, I should read very carefully every one, the most routine from all agencies. Moreover, anything involving policy in any way should have in addition to the normal seventh-floor clearance an additional clearance from M, that is, the Under Secretary for Management, who at the time was none other than Larry Eagleburger. He had to clear for appropriateness or for language that might cause misunderstandings or, worse, appear insulting to the Ambassador-anything that would set him off. I had never encountered anything like this and was rather astonished, but their concerns proved true and the extra care they wanted me to exercise quickly proved entirely appropriate.

Several weeks on, for example, I began noticing that the cables were being signed not just "Silberman," as customary, but "Silberman CAB". I noticed and wondered if it was not some new communications symbol, as there were many acronyms on our cables but I didn't think much more of it. Then, the first time Silberman came back for consultations he came round to see me and Sam Fromowitz, who was the economic officer. Sam was a great, great guy and a good colleague. He had been in Belgrade when I was at the Consulate General in Zagreb, and we had a lot of fun working together in Washington.

Well, what the Ambassador wanted to know first of all was "what are they saying about me, what's going on?" He asked if they had said anything about the "CAB," and at first it didn't register. Then he pressed, saying, "You know, the "Silberman CAB!?" And I asked, "Well, what does that mean? And he replied: "Conceited Arrogant Bastard," explaining that, "One of those State Department guys had called me that, so I thought I would just start signing my name that way." He was reacting to was a little piece that had appeared in the Wall Street Journal, in their front-page column where they brief news items. This one summarized the dust-up over the Toth case, reporting Silberman's denunciation of Tito and quoting some State Department official as saying that our ambassador there was just a "conceited arrogant bastard." So he was reacting to that.

He also wrote what became a rather infamous letter to a Yugoslav-Canadian who wrote to him in Belgrade complaining about his criticisms of Tito, the head of the country as unseemly in a serving ambassador. The first word we got on that was from the man in Canada himself who forwarded us a copy of his correspondence with the Ambassador, explaining that we might want to see it to know what our ambassador was really like. To the man's letter criticizing him for behavior unbecoming of an ambassador, criticizing publicly the head of state of the country he was serving in, Silberman had responded, and I think I remember it verbatim, even close to the exact date: "Dear Mr. Jovanovic (I believe it was), I have your letter of September 28. Kiss my ass! Sincerely, Lawrence H. Silberman, Ambassador."

Q: Didn't say CAB?

SEYMOUR: No, it didn't say CAB but I'm sure it had that effect. The Jack Anderson column got hold of the letter somehow and called me wanting to confirm it. I did confirm it and told him we had the letter too, or a copy of it, and the caller, one of Anderson's assistants, just laughed and called it "refreshing." I believe they printed a short item about it.

Q: Direct.

SEYMOUR: Direct, yes.

Q: Okay. Well, what else did you want to? You mentioned a kidnapped, counter-kidnapping.

SEYMOUR: Oh yes. This was a legal case. And again it's an example of how the two years of consular work in Zagreb proved extremely helpful in serving on the desk. In fact, I would say if you include all the various inquiries you get, about 50 percent of the work was essentially consular, so without that experience I would not have been nearly as well prepared.

But this was a strange case. I was contacted by a lawyer representing a family in New Jersey whose daughter had had a child by her Yugoslav husband, or divorced husband. A court in New Jersey gave custody to her but with visiting rights for him, and on a visit one day he took the child back to Yugoslavia. The lawyer was trying to see what could be done about it.

Well, to contradict what I just said, I didn't really have much experience with that kind of thing, but I did have good contact with the counselor for consular affairs at the Yugoslav embassy. My first telephone call when I got to the operations center on that hijacking case had been to him. I had met him only the night before at his welcoming party, and over the months we had developed good working relations. So we discussed the case a bit from what the lawyer had told me, and he offered to meet with the lawyer to get more details and see how he could help.

We met a week or so later at lunch hosted by the lawyer at the Metropolitan Club, which was nice for both of us. The lawyer laid out the situation very plainly, and the Yugoslav embassy officer equally plainly gave his views of the options under Yugoslav law. He said that the Yugoslav courts would probably favor the father, a surprise in one sense, but he thought they would not give much weight to a New Jersey court decision favoring the mother. Talking it all through, he asked if the lawyer had thought of a "counter-kidnapping," which the Yugoslav official ventured might be the best solution? So we all thought about the various implications of that and came around to thinking that was really the best way to go.

So the lawyer went away with that and a month or so later I got another call from him asking if the embassy could possibly make one of its vehicles available to a firm in London that the family had hired, because the firm thought it would be easier to exit the Yugoslav border in an embassy car. I replied as politely and as reasonably as I could that I didn't think that was something that the U.S. government really should be dealing with. The lawyer indicated he had rather expected that but wanted to ask. I told him I was really sorry, but he said it was a pretty good firm and he thought they would find other ways.

Sure enough, a certain time later, I got a very happy call from the lawyer who told me that yes, the child was back. We talked about possible further ramifications and how to protect from something further or even worse, but I heard nothing more until I got another call from the lawyer asking if it was all right to give my name to a man who was going to write a book about this whole affair in order to recoup the costs to the family, because the firm in London was pretty expensive, I think. I truthfully said I would really be interested in that but, again, thought that it was not appropriate, and again the lawyer assured me he fully understood my position. He thanked me very much again and we wished each other and the family well. I had never heard of anything like that.

Q: To what extent did you keep the- our embassy in Belgrade informed of that kind of a case?

SEYMOUR: I believe I informed them initially about the meeting with the Yugoslav consul general and probably told them about declining the request for use of an embassy car, alerting them generally to the possibility of a child-custody operation. We usually put such things into an "official-informal" cable. Beyond that, I would have needed more detail myself-who it was, what was going on, when, and so forth-and that would have required a degree of involvement that was best not to get into. This was also the Yugoslav consular official's position in that meeting we had: he did not want to get officially involved, even though he had informally given the advice that was ultimately followed successfully.

Q: Okay. Anything else that really stands out on the Yugoslav desk, which was quite an eventful year for lots of reasons?

SEYMOUR: Well yes, it was. There was a fair amount of concern about security of the Yugoslav installations and personnel, as I mentioned, and various instances of violence throughout the year. I mentioned the bombing of the embassy, and a Serbian-American newspaper editor in Chicago was murdered later on. Initially, the American Serbs were saying the Yugoslav secret service had done it, but eventually it came out that it resulted from some kind of rivalry within the Serbian community. Then, somebody in Cleveland, a Croatian I think, had his home burned down, and he thought it was because he was prominent and "people" were out to get him for political reasons.

We also had frequent complaints about the Yugoslav consul general in San Francisco who occasionally brandished a pistol that he kept in his desk to intimidate people who were trying to get visas for visits to Yugoslavia when they were American citizens too. It was the dual-national issue I mentioned before. In addition, there were reports of "Croatian militia" training in the mountains in California waiting for that day when Tito would be gone.

We also received inquiries occasionally from local American officials about how to deal with certain things, say, the mayor of some town invited to a big Croatian event on April 10 to celebrate Croatian independence; Well April 10 happens to be the day the fascist government was installed in Zagreb under the wing of the Nazis, and so we advised that people stay away from that. In addition, a group of American airmen from World War II periodically pressed for a Congressional resolution honoring Draza Mihajlović, a Serbian Chetnik leader whose guerrilla fighters had saved them and other American flyers during World War II but who afterwards was tried and executed by Tito's government. The idea of a resolution and stature honoring Mihajlović was anathema to the regime and it always raised it as a test of US support, which of course created a ticklish situation for us.

There was also the case of Andrija Artuković, who had been minister of the interior and, I think, later of justice in the so-called independent state of Croatia allied to the Nazis during the War. He was a member of the Ustashe party, a fascist movement supported by Mussolini from the late 1920s. After the war, he had made his way to the U.S. under false pretenses of some kind. Then later in the 1950s he was found out and ordered to be deported, but the order was stayed on grounds that he would not get a fair trial in Yugoslavia.

The case was raised and re-examined from time to time, but we could never get around that point about the fair trial. During the time I was on the desk, the Justice Department established an office of special investigations to press for proceedings against Nazis and their supporters, many from Eastern Europeans, who had escaped to the US and elsewhere. Justice moved to re-examine the stay of deportation in Artuković's case and reopen the whole business. We worked pretty hard with them on that. I recall spending a lot of time going through the documents and the history of the proceedings here, which at one point were reviewed by the Supreme Court, in the late 1950s, I believe, and trying to find ways to overcome this both legally and politically. It was eventually done, not on my watch but I believe during Darrell Johnson's tenure.

Artuković, then a very old man in his 70s or beyond, was returned to Yugoslavia. He was in poor health and couldn't really stand trial. Then he died and was buried there, and his son in California was pleading with us on humanitarian grounds to press the Yugoslavs to allow him bring his father's body back to the US, so it became a different kind of case, like the Busi one had done, in a way.. I honestly don't remember the outcome of that, but it was, again, a consular kind of issue with political implications.

There was something else, too that I had in mind to mention, but suffice it to say the Yugoslav desk had always been considered a really challenging assignment and it was certainly that during my year there.

Q: Was there much consideration of really broad policy issues about keeping Yugoslavia together or? I mean, Tito was still alive at this point, that was still kind of for the future I guess?

SEYMOUR: Yes. At that point, in the mid-'70s it was still for the future, but there was always the concern. I think just about every Yugoslav desk officer beginning about 1960 thought that Tito would die on his watch, and we were always very concerned about what would follow. Later on, in 1987-89, when I was back as deputy director for that area, the Balkans, we began to see the beginnings of the fracturing that soon led to disintegration. We were actually surprised that it had held together as well as it did, nearly a decade after Tito's death in 1980. Many, if not most thought it could collapse earlier. There was also the view among some that somehow the country would "muddle through," but it was always an issue.

Q: Well, why don't we stop at this point and I think your next assignment was to Bonn? We've pretty well covered, I think, the Yugoslav and Polish desk times.

SEYMOUR: Okay. I could add one little bit as a segue from Polish affairs to Germany.

Q: Sure.

SEYMOUR: When I went to Bonn, or before I went, a Polish embassy officer, the one I'd worked most closely with arranged a nice going-away dinner for my wife and me. Ambassador Spasowski was there, he's the one who eventually defected, and we had a good conversation with him and his wife. He asked me to always remember one thing on going to Germany. It was that Poland is caught in the middle between Germany and the Soviet Union and no matter how friendly either of them might be for whatever reasons, it was still bad news for Poland to be stuck between such huge countries, and, rather emotionally, he asked for me while in Germany to please remember Poland.

Q: Continuation of the Foreign Affairs oral history interview with Jack Seymour. Today is the 23rd of July, 2004. And Jack we are, I think, just finishing your assignment to the European Bureau at Washington as Yugoslav and then Polish desk officers. And you then went to Bonn to the political section, I think from 1979 to 1983. And what were your main responsibilities there?

SEYMOUR: Well I was in charge of the small external affairs unit. We had one, later, two junior officers in that section and, still later, a summer intern as well. We were part of a large political section with a two-man internal affairs unit, a Berlin affairs team called the "Bonn group" because they represented the US with the French, British, and Germans in the "Bonn Group" to manage Berlin and East German affairs. There was also a political/military unit. In my unit we followed German foreign relations with the world, or at least the political side of those relations, working with the Econ and Commercial and other sections as appropriate.

One growing aspect of this had to do with European Union affairs. When I arrived, the FRG had just finished its stint in the rotating presidency of the EU. It had required a lot of work for our political section, because the European Union was taking on or encompassing more and more of Germany's foreign policy, as the EU tried increasingly to "harmonize" the policies of its members through a mechanism known then as "political cooperation." It was done then on an intergovernmental basis outside the EU treaty framework. An example was the United Nations where the EU tried to coordinate its policies on various issues when they came to a vote.

The Department would send instructions to all the key posts to make demarches on the issues, especially during the time of the UN General Assembly meetings. EU member-states were trying to force us to deal primarily with the presidency capital, which in the six months before my arrival had been Bonn. When the presidency changed, the Germans would formally tell us to make the demarches in the succeeding capital, but they were usually happy to listen and accept "non-papers" with US views on the issues, always while stressing that they did so informally and we should make the official *déclaration* in Paris or wherever.

Q: Because the Commission of the European communities in Brussels really wasn't very involved, it was done by the EU presidency.

SEYMOUR: Yes, for "political cooperation," as they called it, that's right. Later I learned much more about that from my assignment with USEC in Brussels.

In that connection, a special feature of Allied coordination in NATO was the fact that the EU countries through the EU political cooperation structure were increasingly shadowing the work of the experts committees in NATO on various world issues. That meant that when NATO working groups on different issues met, like as not EU working groups on the same geographic areas or functional issues had met, say, a week before to work out the EU position. If they did not actually concert their positions for the NATO meeting, they were at least rehearsing them. As a result, the EU members of NATO had close knowledge of where each other stood on the various questions. In many cases, as well, it was the same EU member-state foreign ministry officials involved in the respective committees or "working groups" meeting in EU "political cooperation" and then in the NATO working groups. Of course the EU was not taking up the military issues, which were outside their realm, but they were dealing with the politics and economics underlying some military questions and that then played into NATO discussions. That was an interesting feature that seemed to take awhile for our security affairs people to recognize, and it began to complicate our work at NATO somewhat.

Also soon after I arrived in Bonn came the invasion of Afghanistan pretty soon after, that winter I guess.

Q: December of '79.

SEYMOUR: Then came the boycott of the Moscow Olympics, so my little section had a lot to do carrying out the lobbying work to press the Germans to join the boycott.

Q: Did the Federal Republic of Germany participate in that boycott or did they go to Moscow?

SEYMOUR: They did not go. I kept close watch on this because it absorbed so much of our time and we received instructions all the time to go and make $d\ddot{u} \frac{1}{2}$ marches, even at the ambassadorial level. There was to be a meeting at some point of the German Olympic Committee in Frankfurt and we had heard that the Soviet ambassador would attend or would be talking to the committee. The Soviets were of course very anxious to persuade the Germans to send their team to the Moscow games. On the eve of that meeting, the Embassy received instructions for the ambassador, Walter Stoessel to call urgently at the highest level in the Foreign Office. Ambassador Stoessel sensed things very nicely, and his meeting, actually, with the deputy foreign minister was for me as notetaker an educational experience of how an ambassador with a subtle grasp of things can manage a discussion and get the right response to fulfill his orders in a way that's most effective with the host government to get the desired results.

The Germans were very much into so-called consensus politics, a rather pervasive concept. It was a form of cooperative decision making known as "Mitbestimmung" in their the labor management relations and carried over into corporate governance and their government's approach to both domestic political and foreign affairs, especially within the European context. They don't like to be out in front or at least at that time did not. They wanted to see what everybody else believed and then they would gradually arrive at their own decisions.

In this situation, they were in a difficult position because they were being press by the U.S. and also the Russians. Stoessel realized this and he put the questions to the deputy foreign minister in such a way as to get responses that would not anger Washington but also wouldn't commit the Germans to do things they could not do. For example, the instructions were for Stoessel to go to meet with the Olympic Committee in Frankfurt as well, and he knew that was not a good idea, so he got the deputy foreign minister to advise and explain how that would be counterproductive. The deputy minister advised that we should, please, back off a bit and let the Germans work at developing the right consensus on this. Without promising, the deputy foreign minister, a close diplomatic colleague of Ambassador Stoessel's, "predicted" that the German team would in the end not go to Moscow, and indeed his "prediction" proved accurate.

In the end, and it was very interesting to see, only three European countries actually boycotted the Olympics: Norway, Turkey and Germany. Interestingly, the first two actually bordered the Soviet Union and were very sensitive about that and also anxious to preserve good ties with the U.S. The Germans perhaps felt vulnerable in similar ways, but they wanted to be quiet about it. As a result they delivered the goods, but they did not get good press for it in the US. If you asked even at the time, many people, unless they followed closely, probably thought that the British had boycotted, because Prime Minister Thatcher was vociferously condemning the Soviets over Afghanistan and calling for an Olympic boycott. But her country's team defied her and went to Moscow anyway, as did most of the other Europeans. So she got the credit for nothing, and the Germans never got any credit because they working quietly, but their team, as the deputy foreign minister had predicted to the Ambassador, did in fact join the boycott.

At the time I thought, not to speak so much about the British, that this has been characteristic, I think, of the Germans that they don't get credit for good things that they do because they're so anxious not to be out in front and not to be public about it. This means that they're rather inept in public relations terms. Perhaps they are this way because they are still trying very hard to compensate for all of the wrongs done before.

Q: And for the reasons you mentioned before they often take awhile to make the position or make the decision and sometimes by then the attention had shifted elsewhere.

SEYMOUR: Yes. And that reminds me of a quip by a deputy assistant secretary, Bill Bode, with whom I worked when I went back to the Office of German Affairs at one point. He had a lot of experience with the FRG and but was dealing with France at the time, supervising the Office of Western European Affairs and a couple of others. I knew him pretty well because I had tried to get a position in that office. Comparing France and Germany, he once remarked that it was so exasperating dealing with the Germans because with the French you wouldn't like what their position might be but you always knew pretty much right away what it was or how bad it was. But the Germans were exasperatingly slow, moving every which way, hemming and hawing, before they finally came to a decision on what their position would be.

Another event during that time in Bonn was the hostage-taking in Tehran. That engaged us a lot. Working with the Germans on this became an important part of our portfolio throughout the time that our Embassy personnel in Tehran were held. A young officer in my section who was very good on Middle East matters carried much of the load at the working level. I guided his work, reviewed his reports, and was occasionally involved in meetings at the Foreign Office as well, but most of the load he carried. Much of it involved getting reports from the German ambassador in Tehran, who was quite active there even though the Swiss were handling US interests.

There were also high-level talks at several points. Secretary of State Warren Christopher would come and meet in Bonn with an Iranian businessman married to a German who traveled frequently to Bonn and supposedly was influential back in Tehran. Unlike most visits by a Secretary, however, these were handled very quietly. Christopher came with only a couple of aides and carried out his mission with little embassy involvement beyond the ambassador. We knew that something was going on that had to do with the Iranians and the hostage situation, but to this day, I don't know exactly what was being discussed. I'm sure Ambassador Stoessel was involved, and I believe the Germans did play a helpful role in some way. How decisive it was I don't know, but I believe it was at least keeping open a channel of dialogue.

Q: But you really weren't involved?

SEYMOUR: I personally was not involved, nor was my boss, the political counselor. The junior officer whom I supervised kept constant contact with the German foreign office, and we reported on his discussions and what he learned. I was occasionally involved in meetings as well, but my main role was in supervising that junior officer. The main channel with Secretary Christopher was closely held; I'm not sure that even the Ambassador knew much of the substance involved, although the Secretary would stay in the residence.

I did have some interesting experiences dealing with other issues. One was El Salvador and the strife there, which was also hot at the time. I remember one time being called up by the SPD director of international affairs whom we dealt with. He had a visitor from San Salvador, a representative of the political wing of the guerrilla group there. My SPD contact wanted to get this man in to pass a message to the ambassador, Walter Stoessel. Well the ambassador wasn't going to meet with him for obvious reasons, but he did agree for me to meet him. I received the Salvadoran in my office on a Saturday morning along with the SPD man for a very interesting discussion. I can't recall the details but in general they were trying some kind of a peace plan and his object was to persuade Washington to lean on the Salvadoran government to bring them to the table. I duly reported this, but it was a non-starter.

Q: Did the State Department know about this contact before it happened and was agreeable to it?

SEYMOUR: Yes, we alerted them and reported the discussion. In a similar way, I met the foreign minister of Chad in a hotel in Bonn one time and his message was for us lean on the French who he said were supporting the "wrong" people in their civil war. We of course reported that, but, again, I do not recall that anything came of it.

Q: So Bonn was a small town in Germany but oftentimes a crossroads?

SEYMOUR: Yes, yes, it really was. And that affected our reporting and everything else. I had come from service in Eastern Europe where we tended to do long and detailed reports, who said what to whom with all the details and nuances. My first boss in Bonn, the political counselor Marten van Heuven pressed me pretty hard for brevity, but I knew the people in the Department following Eastern Europe wanted such detail. After all, I had worked in that office there. I think in retrospect it was a question at that time of having few people in Washington following Eastern Europe who wanted to parse all the nitty-gritty, whereas the volume of activity in Bonn and the many more people at all levels interested in it placed a premium on really short, high-impact reporting.

Having worked in Eastern Europe, I was very interested in Poles and Yugoslavs and the others and sought out their embassy people and the German Foreign Office officials who worked with them. I remember early on doing a detailed cable reporting economic talks the Yugoslavs had in Bonn. It combined insights from their embassy and from German officials. Marten came down the hall waving it and saying he would let it go but he would give me "six months to get Eastern Europe out of my system."

Well, in the ensuing six months, of course, there was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and following that, the Polish Solidarity crisis began building, during which I was sent TDY to Poland for a couple of weeks, so it was really pretty hard for me-and the Embassy, too-to get Eastern Europe "out of the system."

And then later, some years later, I had a little bit of vindication when Marten became the NIO (National Intelligence Officer) for Europe at the National Intelligence Council. He had really good solid experience in Western Europe but not in the East, and he called me at one point early in his assignment at the NIC, when I was acting director for Eastern Europe in about 1988. He said, "Well Jack, as you know, I'm now the NIO for all of Europe and I've got the western part running pretty well but you know that I don't really have experience with Eastern Europe, so I wonder if you could arrange a briefing for me to come over and meet your staff and get their views on things." We had a little laugh over that turn of events. I like Marten a lot and have had the pleasure of working with him on many interesting issues over the ensuing years when I was at the Atlantic Council and also now at the NIC for which he has done some consulting work.

Another interesting issue in Bonn had to do with the German Stiftungen or political party foundations. At that time, in the early 1980s, there was a lot of interest in them, and we had quite a few visitors from Washington coming to meet with them, not to discuss policy so much but to learn how they operated overseas.

Q: The word essentially means foundation.

SEYMOUR: Yes, and each party had one named after a former party leader of note. The Konrad Adenauer Stiftung or foundation was affiliated with the CDU and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung with SPD. Then the smaller CSU, the Christian Social Union, the Bavarian wing of the CDU, had the Hans Seidel Stiftung and the FDP, Free Democratic or liberal party, had the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung. More recently, there is Heinrich Böll Stiftung for the Green Party.

They were thought of at this time as a kind of model. They had played a role in turning Portugal, helping after Salazar's demise to keep it from going communist. Their party affiliations gave them a distance from the government even though they got money from the federal budget. So they seemed to be able to operate as non-governmental organizations, and that gave them some flexibility, which they certainly used to very good and decisive effect in Portugal. But they were operating all around the world; doing a lot, for example, in Latin America, which was hot at the time, observing elections, conducting political party training, and generally assisting the building of democratic institutions and practices there and elsewhere. Of course, they were informed by their particular party viewpoint and tended to work through like-minded people in the countries where they operated, and they had their own programs, but still there was a loose coordination with at least the general lines of FRG foreign policy, which they all supported. I understand, for example, that the Germans ambassadors in various countries would bring them together for informal chats about developments, presumably getting their views and advising them of government views.

At any rate, there was strong interest in Washington in somehow duplicating this and so there were lots of people coming through to talk with them. I think the ultimate result was the creation of the National Endowment for Democracy, which is-

Q: And the National Republican Institute, and the National Democratic Institute, and they get their funding, at least in part, through the NED, the National Endowment for Democracy.

SEYMOUR: Yes, during one of my NGO stints, I worked for the International Foundation for Election System, IFES, which worked closely with those organizations, for example, in a joint program funded by USAID.

Q: I think they were established in the early '80s during the Reagan administration and possibly even at the end of the Carter administration. As you say the idea was well along in Germany and certainly the German Stiftungen had been out ahead of what we doing at the time.

SEYMOUR: Yes, after Bonn, when I was political counselor at the US Mission to the European Communities, as it was known then, I worked with our Labor Counselor who did a lot of business for the AFL-CIO with the EU labor federations, and so I got some exposure to what our labor unions do along those lines as well.

Another development that came to prominence while I was in Bonn was the rise of Solidarity in Poland. This led to a lot of close contact with the German foreign office, the parties, and the Stiftungen and what they were doing in Poland and Eastern Europe. Most of this I did handle myself because of my experience in Eastern Europe and in the Office of EE Affairs in the Department, and also as part of our assorting of tasks in my unit.

I recall there was a lot of anxiety among the Germans about Solidarity because it was pressing so hard politically and not, as the Germans said, acting like a proper labor union. It was acting too much like a political party. Out of their concern about destabilization in Eastern Europe, the Germans were prone to press the U.S. to lean on Solidarity to make it behave, so to speak.

Q: The German Government or the unions?

SEYMOUR: The government, mainly. The unions and the party Stiftungen were pretty active in training and assisting Solidarity, ostensibly in trade union terms but often in effect, wittingly or not, strengthening the organizational capabilities of the movement qua political organization.

A big personal event for me during this period was a very short-notice TDY to Warsaw to fill in for a political officer who had been evacuated with appendicitis. It was a critical time politically, April 1981, and they wanted someone to fill in. Since I was in nearby-Bonn and had served in Warsaw and as Polish desk officer, they asked for me personally in a cable that came in on a Sunday afternoon from the Department. They said send me and so I went. And it was one of the most memorable experiences I had as a Foreign Service officer.

Q: That was in April of '81?

SEYMOUR: April of '81, and the political pressures were building to a crescendo over Solidarity and the possibility of a crackdown, disarray in the Polish United Workers (Communist) Party, concern about reaction from the Soviets, and so forth. Also at that time the Czechs were having a big party congress and Brezhnev was going. Solidarity itself was in full cry, partly to press its advantage with the Polish Communist Party so weak and partly goaded by provocations and reaction to pressure from outside, especially from East Germany.

I arrived a couple days later in Warsaw and received the broadest instructions ever from the DCM, Carroll Brown. He simply asked me to go out and meet all the people I could, people I had worked with before and others and then write up what I learned and what my impressions were. I was not to worry about reading cable traffic or attending embassy meetings or anything like that. To have such license was a political officer's heaven.

I stayed with Carroll, who with his wife was most gracious and supportive of my late comings and goings. I worked out of the political section, with strong support and encouragement from the political counselor, John Vought, spending the mornings looking up people and arranging meetings for breakfast, lunch, coffee, walks in the park, dinner, whatever. I usually returned very late at night and wrote up my notes. The next day I would write the cables, make more appointments, and go to more meetings. I ran on adrenalin and also on the enthusiasm of the people I was meeting and the confidence that came as my facility in Polish returned quickly.

A highlight of this time in Poland was a trip to Gdansk. The Embassy had not been able to send anyone there for awhile and there was word that a national meeting of Solidarity was to take place, so they sent me up there along with an Embassy officer, John Zerolis, to see what we could learn. We got an appointment with the Solidarity leadership, which turned out to be a private meeting with a deputy to Walesa, and we also met with people in their media office. In the course of our discussions they confirmed that they were having that day a meeting of the regional representatives of Solidarity from all over the country and that we could certainly attend with journalist credentials, which we did. There were 150 to 200 people in a large conference hall in a meeting chaired from a long dais by Walesa and national leaders with regional tables arranged around the hall. It was very informal and lasted all afternoon. The "press gallery" was just standing room in the back. When Walesa opened proceedings and went through the agenda, he mentioned that they had a special guest, a deputy foreign minister who would come and talk to them about the foreign policy ramifications of Solidarity's actions. This turned out to be Józef Wiejacz who had been the DCM at the Polish embassy with whom I had worked from time to time as desk officer. In fact, he had been at that farewell party for me that I mentioned.

Well, when he was ushered in with, a couple of aides and a Solidarity fellow, I was standing in the back, and he went right by me. I had an impulse to step forward and greet him that I quickly repulsed in favor of a second one, which was to slink back against the wall. Later I learned that he had spotted me there and asked his people why I was there. We had not seen each other since that farewell party in Washington when I was on my way to Bonn, so he must have been surprised to see me in Warsaw.

But the main thing is the discussion. I took notes on a small pad that I later typed up; I still have a transcript. Wiejacz was introduced and spoke for about 20 minutes before he was interrupted and basically hooted down with pointed questions from the floor. His point had been to educate them about the sensitivities of the "brothers" and "neighbors" and to explain that there was risk for Poland in what they were doing, that they were trying for too much. He went on in this vein until they became visibly annoyed and very inattentive, talking among themselves, scraping chairs, laughing and so forth. Finally somebody from the back of the room got up, called for the floor, was recognized, and in effect told him: "Look, you, Mr. Foreign Ministry Official, have been talking at us for some while; now it's time for you to listen to us. And we'll tell you that we're not a threat to anybody, we just want a better deal here in Poland. And it's your job to tell them that. And while you're doing it ask them about the Katyn massacre and other crimes against Poland." There were calls of "yes, yes" from the floor, and poor Mr. Wiejacz was hooted down. Then proceeded a rather hot and heavy question-and-answer session, and there were more sharp comments. This went on for maybe another hour or so and then he was sort of escorted away in disgrace. To witness all that showed me a lot about the attitudes and depth of feelings of the Solidarity rank and file.

When I got back to Bonn, I wrote a cable trying to sum all this up. It was not that long, only a page, a few paragraphs. Marten, I think, appreciated that brevity. It was titled "Solidarity at the Brink." I tried to conjure up a metaphor that they were rushing toward a cliff and that, contrary to what the Germans I mentioned might have thought, there was no holding back, for several reasons. One was that they realized this was the opportunity of a lifetime that may not come back again soon so they had to push as far as they could. Second, there was no resistance. The party was dissolving. People were turning in their party cards; party members were angry and upset. The leadership was trying to rally them through special meetings and discussions, but the party was losing, and its leaders were at a loss. There no resistance to Solidarity's relentless pushing. The third thing was that the regime was double-dealing. They were at the negotiating table with Solidarity, ostensibly trying to work things out, to grant some of Solidarity's demands, more rights to the workers, perhaps compensation for the earlier arrests and so forth, but at the same time they were kicking them under the table because the secret service was harassing Solidarity leaders and others. They had complained about that to us when we met with them earlier that day. There was a lot of buzz about a recent incident in which one of Walesa's lieutenants, a woman, had been framed in a provocation of some kind, designed to discredit her. It was a disinformation campaign to make it appear that she had been leaking conversations and that kind of stuff. Later on, it got ugly; a priest was killed under suspicious circumstances. They played pretty rough even before martial law. So how could Solidarity trust the government when the secret service was doing this kind of thing?

Thus, it seemed to me then that there was really no way that Solidarity would itself ease up on the throttle. There was, of course, the concern about a Soviet crackdown. Many people, including in the Church expected that. They were anxious to know that somehow America would be with them if that happened. They could not believe that their army would fire upon them, hence the concern it would be the Soviets. Of course, in the event it was in fact the Polish regime and army that implemented martial law that December.

Back in Bonn, with all this running through my mind, I had a rather strange, emotional experience. When I returned, it was Palm Sunday, and we went to the little Anglican chapel there, St. Boniface. It came to me during one of the hymn's portraying Christ's entry into Jerusalem whose refrain includes the words "ride on, ride on, in majesty; ride on, ride on to die." All of a sudden it hit me that this was the kind of situation Solidarity was in. I just choked up and couldn't get through the rest of the hymn, and it affected me for days afterward. And then of course there was the martial law. That too affected me because we picked up our son from the airport that morning-he was returning for Christmas from school in the States-and, literally, as I put the key in the front door with his bags and all, I heard the phone ringing, ran down the hall, picked it up, and it was the German foreign office saying that martial law had been declared and all these people arrested, they were forming a task force, and would I please come down and represent the embassy. This I did and that was pretty much what it was for the rest of that Christmas. So try as I might, I could not get Eastern Europe out of my system, nor could the Embassy in Bonn.

Q: It was a busy time, important time.

SEYMOUR: Yes, our involvement continued for some time, and the Germans too were quite engaged, among other things, to encourage people to send packages of food, clothing and other things to support the Poles. The German government waived postal charges, and the DCM's wife, Sheila Woessner, organized a special effort by embassy employees to take advantage of that. We all bought food and things and packed big boxes full and shipped them free to Poland.

All in all, it was a very interesting tour, lots of important things happening and interesting personalities there. Walter Stoessel was followed by another very interesting ambassador, Arthur Burns, who came with a lot of stature and a big reputation. At first, I was a little put off actually, because he was, of course, a political appointee who did not really know Germany that much. And Stoessel was such a professional and such a skillful person, a consummate diplomat. So that was kind of a downer. But it became clear, of course, and rather quickly that Arthur Burns was a man of substance and rich experience. He quipped at one point that he'd given George Schultz, the Secretary, his first job in government, bringing Schultz on to the Council of Economic Advisers when he, Burns, was chairman, in the 1950s, I believe. Burns also remarked once that he was in Bonn only as long as he had the ears of the president and the secretary of state, and also the Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt. If he felt he was losing their attention then, then he didn't need the job and would gladly go. That gave him a kind of power and serenity, I think.

Another thing I recall about his approach was when he commented once that he would telephone Schulz about something, I believe, involving German and the Soviet Union was going to telephone Schultz, and Bill Woessner shook his head, no, no, no! "You can't telephone it's too sensitive; send an EXDIS cable." Burns looked at him and said, "Look, if I send a cable it will be all over Washington in a couple of days, but if I telephone, Schultz will hear it and maybe the Soviets will hear it, too, but at least they can keep a secret!?" So Woessner was overruled. But he was really good. He went up against Burns a lot over procedural and substantive matters, both, and I think he served the Ambassador very well. They were a really good team.

Another time we were preparing the Ambassador for a hearing. He was returning for consultations and had been asked to appear before one of the committees in Congress. We prepared a big briefing book, all the sections participating in writing papers on various issues in bilateral relations. Going through it with us one last time, he said he was happy, noting that if he couldn't answer a question directly, the answer will at least be in his book. And I piped up impertinently to say that, if not, then the desk officer, who will be there with you, could help. He looked at me and he said, "No, he won't. When I go up there, I go with my book and what's in my own head. Those other fellows, especially the military, have all their aides them whispering in their ears and what kind of an impression does that make? If I can't answer a question and it's not in this book, I will just tell them I don't know and will find out."

Q: Well, I think he had subsequent heads of the Federal Reserve who followed that. Because when you see Greenspan testifying he's usually all by himself.

SEYMOUR: Yes. So maybe he's the model there.

Another thing I remember was the way he had us prepare for his speechmaking. He set up embassy committees, in effect, composed of the country team or designees. There was one agenda to sort out the invitations for the six months or, often, the year ahead and which to accept according to the likely issues of interest-which ones he should go to, which a deputy should attend, and which we should regret.

Once we agreed on that list, he asked us to recommend what he should talk about these events, asking each section to propose three topics. These were combined and prioritized and then matched with the speaking events during the year. Then he would address the individual topics, asking us to come back with another list of the most important things he could, say, for example, about NATO, trade relations, the Middle East, and so forth. Then he would go over the list we all had submitted, and in discussion with us he would approve the final three or four points per topic. At that point, he would say, "OK, write me those speeches," about NATO, trade relations, and so on. Before, with Stoessel and in almost every other speech-writing process I experienced, we tended to go to boilerplate material, to get the latest language from Department statements and cobble it into a speech. So I found Ambassador Burns' approach very interesting and tried to let it guide my work on this sort of thing from then on.

He was quite a fine person and a good leader. When I left, and this is rather personal, I wanted to call on him in his office to say farewell and in a way to make amends in my own mind for not having thought he was going to be up to the caliber of a career ambassador. I told him some of the things I thought were really good about the way he mobilized the embassy resources and said I had learned a great deal serving with him, even though at first I had been doubtful. He accepted that quite graciously, smiling, and then he said, "No, Jack, I have appreciated what we have done together," adding, "you have an inquiring mind and that's good. Keep that up." I took that as a good lesson and good advice. But he was truly a fine guy.

One last thing. I learned this from our desk officer, Bill Gusman later. A few months into his term, when he went back to Washington for consultations, maybe in connection with those hearings I mentioned, Bill arranged a meeting with all the various admin, budget, and other people who served the Embassy and the Ambassador, because he had a tendency to pose impossible demands that were causing them grief. He wanted his own car while in Washington, for example, and he did not know why he was not entitled to first-class air fare after his first trip to post. He clearly had been used to pretty high amenities, so Bill arranged for this meeting so they could all explain how things worked and what he was entitled to and what not. At the end of it, Bill told me, he leaned back, shook his head, smiling, and said, "Well I really appreciate you fellows coming and explaining all this to me and telling me what I'm not entitled too. I only wish you had come to tell me this before I took the job!" He was a great man with a good sense of humor and a common touch, in a way.

Q: Okay. You mentioned that Marten Van Heuven was the political counselor, I guess at the beginning of your time?

SEYMOUR: Yes, he was there for about half of my three-and-a-half year tour.

Then came Dick Barkley, and his deputy was Mark Lissfeldt, who replaced Vlad Lehovich.

Q: Okay. And the DCM pretty much throughout was Bill Woessner?

SEYMOUR: Yes, yes. He was great.

SEYMOUR: I remember once he walked by our office on his way out for the day when I was asking Sandy Lewis, my secretary, after just returning from the DCM late in the day, whether the Econ section had cleared on a cable I had shown him. She told me, not yet, and, showing her the couple of changes the DCM had made, I told her he had cleared it. Just then, we heard a voice from the hall, "Well, if the DCM has cleared it, then goddam it, send it out!"

Q: That was Bill.

SEYMOUR: That was Bill, and so we did.

Q: Okay. Well, I have to ask you if you want to say just a word about Turkey and German relations. Because I know from my experience that you had a little bit to do with Turkey.

SEYMOUR: That's right. That was very interesting. I was definitely not an expert on Turkey although I did talk with Turkish embassy officers and with the Foreign Office, because Turkey and relations with Turkey were important to the Germans, both politically and economically. There were of course many guest workers from Turkey in Germany, a good number of whom had been there for over a generation. Many Germans in the SPD, then in power, had a special tie to Turkey because they or their parents had taken refuge there during the Nazi period. There was in Turkey a military coup in September...

Q: September 1980.

SEYMOUR: You were visiting Bonn at the time, and we got a message in the morning traffic about this coup in Ankara during the night. You had appointments at the Foreign Office, and I remember accompanying you there, and of course they were very interested in what we knew about it and our own reactions. So that event really colored your visit, as I recall.

Q: It was not a total surprise but I had not known anything until perhaps you came or maybe I heard it on the radio.

SEYMOUR: You might have heard it, but I recall bringing a cable to you at that time.

Q: And pretty early in the day to get much reaction from Washington was a bit much to expect, so we kind of tried to anticipate what the reaction would be and I think I was pretty close to what turned out. We understood why the situation got to the point where something really had to happen, and we hoped the military wouldn't stay there indefinitely. And they didn't.

SEYMOUR: I think the Germans also, especially the socialists, had an aversion to military rule and were sensitive on that.

Q: They'd been very close to B?lent Ecevit, who, I think, had been prime minister recently, and his party; I think they had their connections through the Socialist International and other party institutions you mentioned. Okay, anything else we need to talk about your time in Bonn?

SEYMOUR: No, I can't think of...well, there was a NATO summit and a meeting that was a major gathering but involved the usual stuff, advance teams for planning the events, for security, and for communications. During the summit there was a surprise meeting between President Reagan and the Saudi crown prince of Saudi Arabia. It caused a lot of consternation because of the additional organizing to bring it about somewhat secretly on the margins of the summit. I was "site officer" for the Chancellery, where all the formal summit meetings took place and was quite suddenly detailed to the White House advance team to help arrange this side-meeting with the crown prince. I was told by the political counselor to go with a White House guy and do what he says. His first words to me as we settled into the car to go off to the Saudi embassy to meet with the crown prince who was staying there and work out the details were that from now on I did not work for State but for the White House.

Q: And the idea was to arrange a meeting between the president and the crown prince of Saudi Arabia?

SEYMOUR: Yes.

Q: In Bonn?

SEYMOUR: Yes.

Q: At the time that the NATO summit-

SEYMOUR: At the time of the NATO meeting, because the crown prince happened to be there at that time. I had absolutely no idea what the substance was about, but I do remember it seemed related to the events in Turkey and there was a real concern not to let the Germans know what was going on and, also, not to be upstaged by them in any way. As Chancellor Helmut Schmidt was the host of the summit and also of the crown prince, there was perhaps a feeling he might want to horn in. Of course, the idea of keeping it secret from them was a bit ludicrous and, sure enough, when we arrived at the Saudi embassy, it was surrounded and crowded with German police providing security, so they could not help but know something was up with the Americans. Still, keeping it secret was like an obsession with the advance man I was working with. He was somehow transfixed with this mission, nothing else mattered and everybody else should get out of the way. But it worked out just fine.

Q: And you were there partly because you spoke German and knew some of the German officials?

SEYMOUR: Yes, yes, yes, that was the idea. But it was a bit difficult because I had the impression they were also trying to keep the Secretary of State, General Haig, out of things as well, and he was, of course, my ultimate boss, so it put me theoretically in a conflict-of-interest situation. It all happened so quickly, though, and I gave an account to my people at the Embassy afterwards, so there was no real problem.

Q: Okay. Anything else about Bonn?

SEYMOUR: I may think of things. It was a very interesting experience because unlike working in an Eastern European embassy or consulate, there was in Bonn a worldwide focus and one had to become acquainted with a lot of issues. There was a lot when I first got there, for example, about the UN Contact Group for Southern Africa. The Germans were part of that, because of their earlier protectorate over what became Namibia. They were very conscientious and active, and I do remember when the administration changed in early 1981, they were quite concerned that the first thing we did was institute a policy review of Africa and Southern Africa that put everything on hold. It took months and months and months for us to determine our approach, and the Germans became upset and impatient with the delay,

I also remember very much and recalled recently, watching on TV the funeral of President Reagan that the Germans' first reaction to his election was really annoying. They couldn't believe that such a candidate was even running, let alone that he would get elected. They considered him a two-bit cowboy, a B-grade actor. Now my wife's from California, and although neither of us was for Reagan, we both appreciated that California's a pretty big place with a big budget, an enormous economy, and a huge role in global trade, making it comparable to several G-7 members. Reagan had been governor for two terms there, eight years, and that was not an insignificant executive and leadership position. So I would become indignant at hearing this criticism or reading it, and whenever I had a chance to talk to people I would tell them where Reagan comes from and the significance of his work there.

Q: You talked a little bit about the party foundations that you had contact with on foreign affairs, but obviously your main responsibility was the German foreign ministry. Did you also have contact with some parliamentary people, Bundestag members?

SEYMOUR: Oh yes. We covered important foreign policy speeches in the Bundestag, often attending in person, either I or one of my two deputies, even though the internal political section had a Foreign Service National who regularly covered the Bundestag proceedings.. When there was a major speech, the equivalent of the state of the union, say, we covered the foreign policy aspect of it. We met with Bundestag people. The internal affairs section, of course, dealt regularly with them. We focused on foreign policy issues, and would, for example, contact foreign relations committee members or staff from time to time. I remember seeking out somebody from the foreign relations committee staff, after the changeover to the Helmut Kohl government to get some idea of what the new conservative government's foreign policy would be. He surprised me with his vehemence on certain changes they intended. He said they had been in the wings for 12 years, while the socialists played down German interests, all the time wanting to know the consensus, what everybody else wanted without working to promote what the Germans wanted. I asked him how he thought that would change, and he replied that one thing would be a tougher attitude toward those who deal with East Germany: "We're not going to put up with other countries cozying up to the East Germans. We're going to start telling them, for example, that if their leaders, say from Africa, visit East Berlin and don't stop in Bonn also, then they better rethink their expectations of foreign aid from us next time around."

That was the attitude among hardliners, but I don't think it came through that much in practice. Nevertheless, Helmut Kohl was a different sort of figure from Schmidt; less intellectual, more conservative in his politics, as you would imagine, but he was very good in some ways. One was his commitment to Europe and the European Community. He was, I believe, the first chancellor who was not really an adult during World War II; he was a young boy, so he grew up in the post-war period when cooperation against the Soviet threat and European integration were the main goals.

Q: Okay. Anything else about Bonn?

SEYMOUR: Also on foreign affairs we covered think tanks and the parties, all of the party international affairs offices. We talked to them regularly just to keep them close and then also to learn their views on particular issues. Germany is a complex country and we tried to develop a composite understanding of foreign policy. I found myself in some ways preferring the CDU politics but I liked the SPD informality and the easy-going personalities there.

Q: The External affairs unit of the political section was yourself and two others, three others?

SEYMOUR: One other and then, later, a rotating junior officer and then we had some really good summer interns during the time I was there, one each summer.

Q: Okay. And then in 1983, you went to Brussels?

SEYMOUR: Yes to serve at the U.S. Mission to the European Communities, as it was known then. I was drawn there partly because George Vest was the ambassador. Also, I had formed early on the notion that that, being a Europeanist, I should either know about military matters or economic matters and therefore serve either at NATO or the EU mission. I first took notice of the EU while in Warsaw where I saw the way the EU member-state embassies interacted very closely. Ambassador Davies would grumble that they had already discussed together the questions on the agenda of the NATO ambassadors' monthly meetings, which made discussions in that forum anti-climactic. I also got to know the German DCM, who had served in their permanent representation in Brussels and spoke a lot about the EU and its structure and procedures. That gave me the feeling the EU was both complicated and likely to become increasingly important in Europe, and hence to US policy, and I should learn about it. So when an opening in Brussels came up, actually in an off-cycle, I went for it.

Q: What was the position?

SEYMOUR: It was political counselor, which seems an anomaly in a way, like being an econ counselor at NATO. Ken Yalowitz was that and he actually had a lot to do there, as I did at USEC, following the political aspects of the European communities in their many forms. This meant keeping up with the politics of the Commission, the politics of the member-states and their interaction in a political sense, and also the activities of the European Parliament, which met in Strasbourg but had offices in Brussels. The Econ section followed economics and finance and trade and so on, and our large agricultural section followed farm policies, which were also a big issue, because of EU tariffs and import regulations and the EU Common Agricultural Policy and its effects on US interests in global trade.

In the political section we had an officer who covered each Community Council meeting, whether they were in Brussels or not. They usually had some meetings in Luxembourg, some in Brussels, and some in the presidency capital. There were General Council meetings of the foreign ministers and individual specialized council meetings-finance, agriculture, fisheries, transport, and so on-in which the ministers responsible would gather. About three times a year they held European Council meetings, the gatherings of heads of state and government that put the final stamp on many key decisions. This was all within the "Community" framework.

In parallel, they had a 'political cooperation' process that, at the time, worked informally outside the Community framework but had already become quite structured, with a hierarchy of decision making similar to the Community process from the lower-level meetings of political representatives, to political directors in capitals and up to the foreign ministers who met informally in "Gymnich" sessions after the castle in Germany where "political cooperation" first began. These meetings often would coordinate politically the policies that would form or implement decisions taken on a Community basis. They were often conducted on the margins of Community meetings with the foreign minister of the presidency simply announcing that they would now put on their political- cooperation hats. With subsequent reforms, this political-cooperation, foreign policy process, was incorporated into the, now, European Union structure, but it began rather informally to meet a perceived need. It was also a source of tension with the Community structure, represented by the European Commission, which was always on guard against encroachment by member states as political entities into the Community process and prerogatives or against their circumvention of that process. It was a power struggle and a birthing struggle.

It was all very confusing to American diplomats in EU member-state capitals, I use the current term, and to this diplomat upon arriving in Brussels. One of the first notions I discarded was that the European Union was something monolithic, because its policymaking was quite disparate at least on any political or economic issue in any way contentious. Still, it would be a mistake to compare it with our more centralized foreign policy because we too have the Pentagon and the State Department with their different viewpoints, not to mention the Congress or even the White House.

Consequently, I sought out a lot of different people in the early days, mostly to learn the ropes but, of course, later many were informative contacts. One, in particular, became a mentor in the sense of explaining the community; he was a very intellectual fellow who was a director-general in the European Council secretariat staff, the Council being the collection of member-state governments, as opposed to the European Commission, the executive arm of the Community. This gentleman was in charge of the budget, sort of like OMB, or rather a congressional budget office, because, as this man explained the Council actually functioned more like a legislature to the Commission's executive function.

I looked this man up in the directory, because the British budget rebate was a big issue at the time. Prime Minister Thatcher was demanding recalculation of member-state payments to the Community to compensate the UK its excess revenues over payouts which resulted in a net deficit for the UK as opposed to France and others that received a net surplus in Community benefits, say to farmers, compared to their contributions taken from a percentage of value-added taxes and other items taxed to pay into the Community budget. Besides his responsibilities for the budget this official also represented the Council in European Parliament meetings, so he seemed a good person to know, and no one from USEC had been in touch with him as far as I could tell.

In the first meeting, he gave me a little tutorial, and one thing he advised is not to think of the Council of governments as an executive but rather as a legislature with authority to approve or reject what the executive, the Commission proposes. The Parliament, he added has the form of a legislature, being composed of representatives elected from member-states, but it acts more as a consulting body, with binding authority only in approving budgets and nominations for Commission president and commissioners. Beyond that nothing, it could only recommend.

We also had an officer who followed parliamentary activities, because their foreign policy recommendations often dealt with issues of importance to the US. That officer would go to Strasbourg to attend their monthly meetings, which lasted a week. I went several times and had some fascinating discussions with members, including Otto von Habsburg, the crown prince and son of the last Austrian Emperor, who was a very active and visionary member (CSU) from Bavaria. He could not then return to Austria or Hungary, as I recall, although that has since changed. Another was a very interesting younger German CDU member, Hans-Gert Poettering, who is now President of the Parliament.

Also, midway through my four-and-a-half year tour, we instituted a "rover" program with a new permanent slot for an officer to cover more intensively the "political cooperation" meetings. He would go on assignment to the presidency capital, working out of our embassy there and meeting virtually daily with the three representatives of the past, current, and future EU presidents for political cooperation. This gave him superb continuity, because when the presidency shifted six months later to a new capital, he had already worked six months with the officer in the Foreign Ministry of the country currently in the chair, who would go on to serve with a counterpart in the next presidency foreign ministry who had been part of this "troika" in the previous capital and was already by that time well-known to the rover. And he would have met and worked with the officer from the previous presidency who would go to the next one as part of the troika, and so on.

I believe our rover system continued at least until the political cooperation function was subsumed into the EU after the Maastricht Treaty. We would supplement the rover's reporting with the EU Commission view obtained through our own contacts in Brussels.

This operation gave us a strong insight and some influence in the EU "political" or, really, foreign-policy process. I believe it was unique among non-EU embassies. It also took a big burden from our embassy in the presidency capital. There was some tension with some of our embassies, mild turf issues, because our rover required support from them and at the same time could be seen as encroaching on their turf. Big embassies seemed more receptive, as I recall, but a small one like Luxembourg would have mixed feelings because, though short-staffed, they often welcomed the excitement of being in the presidency capital and it became a full-time preoccupation during those six months.

But there were no serious problems, because essentially our rover was supporting them. He was detailed to them to strengthen their ability to report was going on with their host country's presidency, which was their responsibility. Most came quickly to see it that way. This duality, though, did reflect as well that we in USEC, or USEU now, were assigned to the European Communities, not to any one capital. In any case, the officer who was our first "rover," a polished, personable, and highly capable diplomat, easily handled any such difficulties. He went on to serve as staff assistant on the Seventh Floor, DCM in Paris and recently as an ambassador and charg      for awhile, at USUN.

Q: How much time would that officer spend in Brussels?

SEYMOUR: Not that much, really. Depending on the workload and what was happening, when in the political cooperation process, he might be with us for a couple of weeks and then a month in the other capital, perhaps returning for a few days to coordinate with us and prepare for the next round of meetings. It was not always easy for him, shifting around so much but he managed it well.

Q: I remember seeing in Bonn where you'd just come from a pretty big staff.

SEYMOUR: Yes, but there were only one or two to handle the political cooperation and extra Community business, although some of the latter could be taken up by other sections, depending on their particular responsibilities-Econ, Agricultural. The political cooperation was quite intense, as the EU had numerous committees for the world regions and a number of functional categories, like the UN, CSCE, in which they coordinated policy through the hierarchy up to the foreign ministers. It was through this process that they would coordinate EU positions on world issues, and we worked hard to get US views into that process and to report decisions emerging from it.

I mentioned earlier that from my time in Bonn one of the first things I began realizing was that in working with the EU or a member-state there was always the question whether we should address the member-states or the community and, if the member-states, whether we were doing so bilaterally or in their capacity as EU members. The answer, of course, was both, but we had to be mindful of the context, and often we had to make the formal approach to the presidency capital, or to the EU Commission in order to get the right address. We worked it on both tracks, but we had to demonstrate that sensitivity to the Community process.

Some presidencies were easy, even announcing that before they got down discussing a topic, they wanted to share what the American views with their colleagues. Some, in particular France at that time, were sensitive to this, grumping that the US had so much influence it was a virtual EU member. Sometimes, we heard that out of sensitivity to such complaints, the presidency chair would use circumlocutions to the effect that he or she had an additional perspective on the issue to put on the table. Others would say "our friends" think thus and so; some would simply lay on the table a copy of the US "non-paper" they had.

There was also the sensitivity of the European Commission, which exerted strong proprietary pressure regarding its responsibility for Community business, for anything covered by the treaties. In the Commission secretariat was an office that dealt with political relations with member-states, which always sent a representative to political cooperation meetings with whom we in Brussels were in contact. So we double-tracked demarches and got their take on the meetings and the decisions that were taken.

During my time in Brussels the Commission President Jacques Delors established an eponymous "commission" to explore ways to integrate the Community and reform other procedures. Its work led to the "Single European Act" that, among other things, took a big step toward merging political cooperation (foreign policy coordination) with Community policy.

Q: Can we stop at that point because I think it's about the time we agreed on and we'll pick that up next time.

SEYMOUR: Okay. Sounds good.

Q: This is an oral history interview with Jack Seymour. It's the 18th of May, 2005. We're resuming this after an interruption of maybe 10 months so we're a little hazy on exactly where we left off but we're going to start with your assignment to the United States Mission to the European Community in Brussels, which I think was from 1983 to 1987. And Jack, why don't you say what your position was and what some of the main issues were in that four-and-a-half year assignment.

SEYMOUR: I was the political counselor. The main business of the mission certainly at that time was economics, agriculture, trade, finance and all the sub-issues related to those. But the political section was busy and a rather large. It essentially focused on the institutions and the players, the politics of the EU and its interaction with the member-states. It was fascinating to follow, because the EU was becoming a pretty significant institution and a very significant experiment in supranationalism and harmonization of policies among many states. It is constantly evolving and having to adapt and develop new policies and procedures to deal with new situations, especially with its recurring expansions, and as its influence expands accordingly.

I'm amazed at the change in the EU today from two decades ago when I served in Brussels. For one thing the distance between the EU as an entity and the member-states has narrowed considerably. At that time, as I mentioned, the "political cooperation" or foreign policy process was quite separate from Community business, and for the Community to get into defense policy was a big no-no. The closest link I'm aware of at that time was a customary breakfast meeting once a month between the Commission President and the NATO Secretary General to informally compare notes. The concern, of course, was that the Community would encroach on and undermine NATO. We certainly held that view as did a few member-states, notably the British. The French, I believe, were surreptitiously pushing for it but they also had reservations.

To illustrate the distinction between the European Commission as the Community executive and the member-states, I recall a conversation with a Commission secretariat official soon after Prime Minister Thatcher had visited Hungary and, among other things, promised the Hungarians that she could get a better deal for them in terms of Community quotas that had long existed on their wines, ceramics, and other things. They were, of course, not yet a member of the European Union. When I mentioned Thatcher's promises, this Commission official stopped me short and said Prime Minister Thatcher has no business talking about trade with the Hungarians, that's a Community matter and she is out of line.

In another instance, though, an Israeli embassy officer filling me in on recent EU-Israeli talks about renewal of their financial protocol made the point that the discussions with the Commission were the crucial point of negotiating because the Commission would formulate a mandate to propose to the Council, the member-states, and when the Council approved this mandate for "negotiations," the negotiations for all practical purposes had ended. So these preliminary talks with the Commission were in his view crucially important as the opportunity for Israel to get its views incorporated into the process and final document. For as he said, "negotiations would end when the Council approved the 'mandate,'" and with that, Israel's real influence over the outcome.

In addition, I remember my first fall in Bonn carrying out there the usual round of *dîç 1/2* marches to host countries regarding US positions on various issues for the upcoming UNGA (United Nations General Assembly). We had a long list of talking points from the Department to convey to the Germans in a cable that had gone to all posts for similar purpose. I met with the fellow in charge of UN affairs at the foreign office, and he was very gracious and very happy to hear what we had to say, but he did remind me at the outset and also at the end of our discussion that this was all unofficial and informal because our formal *dîç 1/2* marche had to be delivered to the Community itself, to the presidency country, because UN matters were a subject of Community policy in keeping with their aim to "harmonize" policy in the intergovernmental political cooperation process that I described earlier. Therefore it wasn't enough to go to a particular member state or even all member states but we should approach the current presidency capital and foreign office, which, of course, we were doing. To observe the niceties, though, our diplomats there would, or should, specify that they were communicating to that foreign office as the representative of the Community presidency.

Q: Let me kind of pick up that in terms of your assignment as political counselor at the mission to the European Community at that time or communities. If there was such a *dîç 1/2* marche that the United States wanted to convey views, it would be done by the embassy in the presidency capital rather than by you at the mission to the communities?

SEYMOUR: Yes, yes that's correct, because this was essentially then still an intergovernmental matter. We would of course inform the Commission secretariat official who followed EU political cooperation, and we often got good feedback from him because of his Commission viewpoint, which was often different. It was not necessarily objective because he was there to protect Community equities, but it often provided a useful perspective.

Q: So you're main contacts, people that you worked with in Brussels at the mission were the commission, the staff of the communities, and the delegations, part of a council of ministers who were permanently based in Brussels and I guess anybody else that happened to be interested in the European communities in Brussels non-governmental organizations or-

SEYMOUR: Yes, that's correct. And also the secretariat of the council of ministers. There was also in Brussels a permanent secretariat for the Council, the governments, and those governments had their "permanent representation" as well, in the form of quasi-embassies, usually head by a diplomat of ambassadorial rank, and staffed by representatives, experts, from the relevant ministries, in addition to the foreign ministries, to deal with finance, trade, agriculture, industry, and so forth..

Q: Separate from the Commission?

SEYMOUR: Separate from the commission to manage those Community matters for the governments, the floating councils of ministers, say, agriculture ministers meeting on agriculture issues, or finance ministers on currency and exchange rate issues, or trade ministers on trade. There was then a whole structure that has since expanded even more to include such things as home affairs and other issues.

Q: Environment.

SEYMOUR: Environment and so forth. But then the foreign ministers when they met in general council took up any Community issue and generally kind of put the final stamp on things. And also of course they did foreign policy, or "political cooperation" as it was called then.

Q: Did you travel around the communities or were you pretty much locked into Brussels so to speak?

SEYMOUR: We did travel quite extensively. One of my first own first and more interesting trips was to Athens after the Greeks had recently joined. I think they joined in January 1982 and were to take the rotating presidency, as almost a brand-new member in July of 1983 for six months. That meant our embassy in Athens would be responsible for reporting and also making the demarches on...-

Q: To the presidency.

SEYMOUR: To the presidency. And since it was the first time Greeks had done this, it was also the first time our embassy had done their bit, so we in Brussels thought it would be good to send somebody from our mission to consult with the embassy to prep them and work out how we would coordinate. I spent three or four days in Athens, a very delightful time there, and I think it helped to prep the embassy and establish a working relationship with it for its coming duties.

Other officers in the political section, and elsewhere in the Mission traveled frequently. We sent somebody to all of the European Parliament meetings, which took place mostly in Strasbourg and once a quarter in Luxembourg or in Brussels, because the Parliament was passing resolutions on different issues of interest to the US. Although not binding, their resolutions resulted from considerable study and effort by the responsible committees, and they had a significant public relations or public diplomacy impact, so we had someone there for every monthly session for about a week. We had very capable officers for this, but I went down on occasion and found it quite fascinating. In fact, I met or saw in operation some very interesting European politicians there-Simone Veil and Le Pen of France, for example, and Otto Van Hapsburg, whom I've mentioned.

We also had a political-section officer designated to cover the whole series of council of ministers meetings. That meant traveling to those sessions to cover them with the press corps and also through private meetings with the EU diplomats whom he knew from Brussels and other capitals. Those sessions, and there were many of them, too many to cover them all, were in the presidency capital but also once a quarter in Brussels and Luxembourg. Our officer, again a highly capable diplomat, was on the road often. Each presidency concluded with a European Council "summit" meeting as well. As I described with the political cooperation "rover," this officer sent his reports through our embassy in the respective capital or he returned to Brussels to file, or often telephoned information of critical importance, but he was assigned to USEC rather than being detailed to the embassy, as was the "rover." His role since we weren't members was a bit as an onlooker, but he knew a lot of people in the delegations and also the journalists who covered the Community who were always at these meetings and got good information through these contacts.

Q: And that person would work with the relevant embassy, say in Athens if he was in Greece.

SEYMOUR: Yes, that's right, he would use their facilities. There were sometimes turf questions, but he was so obviously a great boon to them in their reporting that it never became a problem. He was in effect parachuted in for these meetings but he wasn't there the whole time during the presidency, so they had plenty to handle on their own and there had to be close coordination with the embassy.

These three officers who covered the council of ministers meetings, the political cooperation process, and the European Parliament had some of the best assignments in Europe. Because of their travel and scope of issues and the rotation through the member countries, they could visit and work in six or more countries during a three-year tour in Brussels. And they acquired deep knowledge of the workings of the institutions and also the internal and foreign policy issues of Europe. Their coordination with our embassies helped establish a much smoother, more seamless system of reporting on many issues that were rather important to us in terms of transatlantic cooperation and on specific issues where we were trying to influence EU views on different issues. At the time I was there Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Central America in general were big, the Middle East always was big, as was Eastern Europe at times, and there were many other questions too.

I'd like to make a couple more points about this and perhaps then we should then move on. The first point is to illustrate what the EU means to the member country. For example, when any particular country, say, the Germans had the presidency, the presiding chairs of all the different committees from the council of ministers on down through the bureaucracy to the political directors and office directors below them would be from the German foreign office and the responsible ministries-finance, agriculture, trade, industry, or whatever. They would set the agenda, run the meetings, and see to all the preparations and paperwork.

Q: At all levels?

SEYMOUR: Yes. This meant they had to be knowledgeable not only about the issues in Germany but also in the other EU countries and would have to interact rather intensively with their counterparts in the member-states. At one point a man became agriculture minister in Germany who spoke only German, which is not or was not a working language of the Community. It recognized only French and English as "working languages." Although formal documents were translated into all and major meetings had interpretation in all, for expediency many less formal, "working" meetings were conducted only in the two working languages. So there was considerable grouching from the others at first about how a German, even a minister, could function speaking only German.

Well, it worked out somehow, but it illustrates what I would call the "Europeanizing" of the bureaucracies of the different member states. So that for people in the ministries and even the ministers themselves it's not enough to know all about, for example, German agriculture and German problems and procedures but one must know all about the European Community agricultural policy and what the positions or interests are of all of the member states. So each minister and bureaucrat automatically assumes works in an extra dimension beyond his or her own country in all of these matters, and as this is multiplied through bureaucracies of the member countries, you get a parallel "European view" that develops. This happens even in the UK, which was often criticized for not being "European" enough, but whose bureaucracy at home and officials in Brussels were extremely effective and efficient in the way they worked the process, coordinating closely with London. So in all this, you can imagine that the officials around the Community, or the Union now, get to know each other very well; they know what the positions are, what the various countries' "red lines" are, how much negotiating room they have, what they can give, what they need to bring back home for political reasons and things like that.

Q: And I would think that everything you say applies certainly to all of the member-states. It works pretty well for the larger member-states, but for a small state like Luxembourg or Ireland it's quite a burden to take on all these responsibilities.

SEYMOUR: It's a tremendous burden which pretty much captivates the whole government, the foreign office for sure and a lot of the other ministries, too, throughout the whole six months and even a bit before as they are preparing for it.

Q: And even after.

SEYMOUR: And even after as they are sort of cleaning up and so on. But fortunately the system allows them to pass unresolved questions on. You mentioned the two that are perhaps hardest hit by the burdens of running things as presidents: Ireland and Luxembourg. But interestingly sometimes they got good marks for their performances, I guess, partly because they realized it was going to be a full-time commitment and gave it a more than full-time effort and also because their own bureaucracies were smaller and more streamlined. Sometimes the bigger ones had the clearance problems or perhaps inner political differences to work out and were hindered by those complications from performing as well as they might in the presidency. And there was always the press scrutinizing the prospects for each presidency and giving marks like C+ or B at the end of each country's tenure in the chair. But for the need for officials in all governments who were dealing with EU issues to get and stay knowledgeable has only increased as the EU has extended its sway over the years.

In this respect, I would like to elaborate on the Community/Union legislative process that I mentioned, that is, EU legislation. One of the first things I learned is that the European Parliament is not really the legislature. It is an important sounding board for decisions that are being made and it's a way of bringing public opinion to bear on issues and the performance of the Commission and member-states, and these are important things. There is still talk, though, about a "democratic deficit," that the people of Europe don't really understand what the EU is about and don't feel they have a say in what's being decided about things like regulations on commerce, transport, industry, farming, fishing and numerous things that affect their activities and their lives. So at least the parliament is a sounding board; it does have power to approve the budget, to approve appointments of the Commission President and the Commissioners, to approve treaties, and to have Commissioners defend their policies regularly before it. But it does not approve the regulatory and other decisions made daily by the Community bureaucracy. Ultimately that authority rests with the member-states and their permanent representatives in Brussels, for routine matters, and on up the hierarchy for more important questions.

Also, I want to say something about how U.S. policy has evolved to adjust to changes in the Community. I'm hazy on details but when I arrived in Brussels in the winter of 1983, there was a sharp distinction between the Community business, economic mostly, and the political cooperation or foreign policy process. But in 1985, I think, they passed an agreement called the Single European Act, which was an effort to sort of bring these two things together. Since then they have passed treaties, notably the Maastricht treaty to advance that marriage significantly, creating among other things the European Union, amalgamating the several Communities (Economic Community, Euratom, and Coal and Steel Community, which no longer exists). Now, after a mishap or two-and significant expansion-they are trying to "deepen" the Union still further through another intergovernmental treaty process.

Q: The constitution?

SEYMOUR: The constitution, which is bringing the political foreign policy and economic policy closer and closer together. They now have a permanent secretariat that deals with foreign policy. Its chief, Javier Solana, is an informal foreign minister for the Union, although that function is divided a bit because there is also the director of external affairs in the Commission, which means trade, and there are of course the foreign ministers in their council of ministers who willy-nilly get involved in foreign-policy issues. But Javier Solana seems gradually to speak and act more and more for the Union on foreign policy and its execution on the EU plane.

This has brought the US into more direct engagement with the central EU structure rather than solely with the member-states as it used to be when foreign policy was an intergovernmental matter for the then European Community. To illustrate, when I was in Brussels we had an annual high-level US-EC meeting, usually a lunch tacked onto the NATO ministerial in December. On our side, in addition to the Secretary of State there would be secretaries of commerce, treasury, agriculture and the trade representative who would meet with their Commission counterparts. And that was it in terms of our dialogue at the upper level.

I recall that the morning after the US-Soviet "breakthrough" summit in Reykjavik took place I think in the fall of 1985 or so (I would have to check the details), Gunther Burkhardt, then Commission President Jacques Delors's chef de cabinet and recently EU "ambassador" in Washington, called me rather urgently to say that now we needed to get political issues on this agenda for the ministerial in December. He proposed some political subjects to talk about, and we reported this to Washington. We must have leaned out a bit too far, though, in passing this on, because the next day we got a cable slapping us down saying that the US-EC dialogue was strictly economic, there will be no political issues on the agenda.

Q. At the ministerial level?

SEYMOURU.S.-Yes, and that's the way it was for, I think, several more years, but, gradually, as the political discussion has become much more accepted and integrated into Community or EU business, it is, I believe, routinely on the agenda of these high-level talks. In fact, now there are regular meetings of the EU president and Commission president once or twice a year with the US president to discuss a range of issues in transatlantic cooperation.

Q: That's at the presidential level.

SEYMOUR: Yes, it's gone to the presidential level and so we're, I think, treating the European Union with more of the respect that they've been claiming for many years.

Q: Before we go on, would you want to just say a word about the internal organization of the mission? You mentioned, roughly how large was the political section? Was George Vest the ambassador, the U.S. representative during your entire period? Who was, was there a DCM, like a normal embassy?

SEYMOUR: George Vest was there for a year. Unfortunately he did leave about a year or so into my tour to become Director General of the Foreign Service. Subsequently, we had a succession of two political appointees. Both were interesting characters, but they were in my view not really the right people for the time. We could go into that if you like.

The DCM when I arrived was Bill Barraclough, an economics specialist, as tended to be the case at USEC: the ambassador would be, if career, more politically experienced and the DCM would be an economic-commercial specialist, with perhaps trade experience as well, even outside of Europe. Then we had, two large operational sections: Econ (commerce and finance) which included two or three people who actually came from the STR, the trade representative's office, and a large agriculture section. There were constant turf problems between them, exacerbated, I'd say, by a bit of unfortunate personal chemistry between the Econ and Agricultural Counselors there at the time. I recall as Political Counselor being in a neutral position in most respects and kind of becoming an informal mediator between the two incumbents over different things.

We also had a two-officer public affairs section which was very busy and very active, because the relations with Europe very often involved contentious trade issues and other frictions that we in Brussels would have reason to comment on and to know about and to try to put the best foot forward for the U.S. My political section had six people. One followed the European parliament, another the European Council in its various manifestations, and, later, the "rover. I described these earlier. There was a Labor Counselor and also an officer who followed EU development activities, an active portfolio of considerable interest in Washington, and...

Q: In the political section?

SEYMOUR: In the political section. That was something, I don't know quite how that happened but it was there when I got there. There was one sour note toward the end. In my last six months we had a replacement, an economic officer, who was unhappy to be in the "political" section." She followed a very good economics officer and a good political officer, who went on to serve as ambassador and a deputy assistant secretary, but she was unhappy about being slotted to her mind improperly. Despite my efforts to demonstrate to her that it would be a broadening experience, she protested pretty much the whole way, and I can't remember, but possibly she did switch afterwards.

The development job was actually a pretty big one because the European Union is a big, world-class donor, and development was also very much an external affairs matter because of the clear foreign policy aspect to their work with countries all around the world. During my tenure the EU were reviewing and extending Lomé Convention, which was one of a series of treaties which kind of regularized their relations with the developing countries, in this case those of the ACP countries in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific that had been former colonies of the EU member-states. There was quite a science to all that and it was good for an economic officer. We also had annual consultations between our Administrator of USAID and the European Commission counterpart and his staff for development in Directorate General VIII, as it was then. And, of course, we did a lot of regular reporting on EU development activities, development questions. The underlying issue in our relations on this subject was how well we could coordinate, fill in, augment, and enhance our common efforts around the world. Occasionally some questions of turf would arise. At the time, for example, the French were sensitive about political implications of what the US was doing in Africa. It was a big portfolio, and we needed a strong officer to handle it.

Another experience illustrating in that connection the distinction between the member-states arose when we were trying to get some data about EU aid worldwide. We had to get some of it directly from member-states. We approached the Commission first, and they gave us information about aid from the EU itself, cautioning that it was only part of the picture and we should go to the member-states for data about their individual aid programs. Then those Commission officials added that they had a hard time getting that information from, say, Germany or France themselves. They joked about it so I don't think it was impossible for them, but I believe it wasn't easy. Anyway, it was just as well for us to ask our Embassies in capitals to help out. The point is that the European Union budget provides for a substantial amount of development assistance but that is quite separate from what the member-states themselves might be providing, and for their own reasons. So again it shows that "Europe" is indeed multifaceted, with the EU being an additional, though international and in many respects supranational entity in and of Europe.

A final cultural comment and then maybe we should move on. I recall meeting with someone, I think in the external affairs directorate, to discuss some issue, and we got talking about his dealings with EU representatives abroad. The EU has, in effect, ambassadors in a number of countries, as we do in Washington. This man, a Belgian, was commenting for some reason on something that they had just learned in a report from an EU representative somewhere in Africa. He observed that it can be really difficult dealing with the different nationalities staffing their representations in countries all around the world. He observed to me that one has to know, for example, whether the head of the representation is, let's say Italian or English, because, this Belgian "eurocrat" said, if he's Italian and he's just done something wrong, then we have to make sure our cable remonstrating with him is emphatic enough so he will get the point. We figuratively jump up and down and pound the table, asking how he could be so stupid and so forth, the official continued. Whereas if it were an Englishman, he could be quite offended by that, so we have to employ a more subtle, understated tone. This Belgian official just noted this as an observation on the culture of working in the European Union, which is quite fascinating and illustrates that those national differences persist in subtle ways that we Americans may not always appreciate.

Q: It's probably a lesson that you had learned also.

SEYMOUR: Yes, we did have to learn these things in working with the many nationalities in the Commission. I had thought on going to Brussels that I really knew a lot about Europe but I learned fairly quickly how much more had to learn and I did learn a lot in the four years I was there.

Q: And where did you go in 1987 when you left Brussels?

SEYMOUR: Well, I returned to Washington. I was very interested in serving either in Central European Affairs or Western European Affairs coming from my Brussels experience. But somehow Eastern Europe kept popping up. I made numerous phone calls to the offices in EUR and it became clear that I was going to be going to Eastern European Affairs. It was only later when I was myself handling personnel assignments as deputy director for then EEY that I learned about the EU "meat market" and how the applicants are allocated around the Bureau and their assignments "wired" by a day-long horse-trading session of the EUR DASes, and that's what I had been up against.

I enjoyed the East European Affairs assignment very much, though. I was one of two deputy directors, in charge of the "southern tier," the Balkans, the other deputy being for the "northern tier," Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland.

During the time, it was from '87 to '89, when I was there, we sent out a new ambassador to Yugoslavia, Warren Zimmerman, with instructions that departed somewhat from the old mantra that we had used more or less since Tito consolidated his break with Moscow in the early 1950s. Ambassador Zimmerman welcomed the idea and of course guided us in drawing up of the instructions, which essentially required him to dig more deeply into the human rights issues that were coming to the fore in Yugoslavia. For years before then we had, frankly, gone lightly over that because of Yugoslavia's position and our mantra or coda was to support its "independence, territorial integrity, and non-alignment." Such language had appeared in all major statements and communiqués for years.

Now we were going to give the ambassador more leeway, in fact urge him to do reporting and focus on the human rights issues that were becoming much more troublesome.

Q: Might just note that Warren Zimmerman discusses his time as really the last U.S. ambassador to Yugoslavia in a very well-written book.

SEYMOUR: Yes, I have it. It's called Origins of a Catastrophe and tells how the Yugoslavia disintegrated, with particular attention to the roles of the Serbian and Croatian leaders, Milosević and Tudjman. It's very good analysis.

Q: But let me just ask you on that point that you just made, was it Zimmerman going and given his interests and instincts that led to this sort of shift in U.S. posture toward Yugoslavia or was there something else or the situation on the ground of course was evolving and becoming more difficult.

SEYMOUR: It was a combination. There were some serious issues that were disturbing to us and were attracting attention in Congress. For example, some Yugoslav citizens (Slovenes, I think) had been jailed in Slovenia and were going to be tried in a military court for releasing to a Slovene journalist information that was deemed sensitive and detrimental to Yugoslavia, at least as the Yugoslav authorities saw it. There was to be a closed trial with all the trappings of a form of persecution or of authoritarian handling without transparency and due process. It was also arousing anger among the Slovenian people, possibly foreshadowing and fomenting the frictions still to come.

There were several other issues like that. In addition, a few months before I joined the office, Slobodan Milosević had taken over the Serbian communist party, ousting his predecessor and moving to consolidate control as a one-man autocrat, a latter-day Tito. Though he posed as something of a reformer, his approach was infused with Serbian nationalism, which he soon realized he could exploit for his own purposes. This was creating difficulties and a lot of concern, including especially from Yugoslav-Americans, about what was happening, the growing nationalism, the clamping down on the relative freedoms of movement and speech. Yugoslavia, as I might have mentioned earlier, had been relatively liberal in those areas by comparison with Poland, not to mention other members of the Warsaw Pact-except for two sacrosanct things. One was Tito and his leadership, the other was what they called "chauvinism," that is putting one republic up against another, either in speech or in actions. So Milosević's rule seemed to represent a retrogression or retrenchment.

This was at the republic level-Serbia. During that time, the prime minister of Yugoslavia who happened to be a rather Western-oriented Croatian was struggling to get the federal banking system and the overall economy in order, to make it more open and more free-market in effect, and he needed loans. I remember an issue that arose when the Export Import Bank announced it planned to downgrade Yugoslavia's credit rating, and Tom Simons, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs and I went to a hearing there. Tom argued very eloquently, persuasively for keeping the loan window open for Yugoslavia as being extremely important politically, and it certainly was. The unfortunate thing is that Milosević, riding a wave of influence that he stirred up with his Serbian-nationalistic appeals, worked to frustrate what this prime minister was trying to do and then eventually of course Milosević pretty much took over, or tried to.

Q: At the time we still were very much interested in keeping Yugoslavia together, the territorial integrity was one of our principle objectives, as you said, for the country, to what extent did we begin to see what ultimately happened develop in the period that you were deputy director, this stronger role of the republics? And to what extent did the ethnic American communities begin to anticipate the independence of Croatia and Slovenia and so on?

SEYMOUR: Well, I don't want to say that anybody necessarily predicted exactly what would happen. We knew that serious trouble was coming. Travelers to the US, for example, who occasionally stopped by the Department spoke about the growing problems. We got reports from the Embassy and Consulate General, of course, but hearing it firsthand had an impact. Slovenian businessmen came by. The Slovenes were big in lumber and furniture exports to the US, and they also made Elan skis and ski boots produced by Humanic. Some of them spoke with a vehemence that I do not recall from the days when Slovenes, as the Croats saw it, were sitting on the fence during the "Croatian Spring" in the early 1970s. We would also hear from Yugoslav-Americans, including Serbian-Americans returning from visits there about how bad things were getting, for example, in Kosovo, where Serbia was cracking down on so-called Albanian terrorist activities. One American of Serbian birth predicted in rather dire terms that, with both Serbs and Albanians arming themselves, it could be "like Lebanon."

The Slovenes voiced more of a sense of being fed up with what was going on in Belgrade, the financial centralization that was going on, because the central banks of each of the republics had enjoyed a lot of autonomy. This made it difficult for the central government in dealing with, let's say conditionality from the IMF (International Monetary Fund), because Belgrade's writ didn't necessarily extend to the bank in Croatia or Ljubljana, Slovenia. So there was a built-in problem there. And one thing that may have contributed to the break-up was the efforts by the Belgrade bank, which in some ways was forced by the IMF to gain greater control over Yugoslavia's economic policies and this provoked from the republics. The Slovenes in particular were having none of this. The attitude expressed by the businessmen I mentioned was not that they were going to initiate anything, but if something happens, "We're out of here, we're gone." In a sense that's what did happen in Slovenia, and they were fortunate to be able to get away quickly and to hold their ground against the futile, one-week effort by the Yugoslav army.

Still, many people had thought somehow Yugoslavia would "muddle through," as it had before in other crises. I would point to a big exception to that. It was produced by the office where I'm working now, the National Intelligence Council, as a "National Intelligence Estimate" that was starkly prescient and whose main points somehow got press attention. It predicted in the fall of 1990, about a year after I had transferred to the Office of Central European Affairs, that Yugoslavia would not last 18 months.

Q: That was accurate.

SEYMOUR: That was very accurate. It was a carefully prepared and bold estimate. Interestingly, it was prepared "under the auspices" of a former Foreign Service officer, Martin Van Heuven who was the National Intelligence Officer for Europe at that time. I mentioned earlier some fond memories of working with Martin in Bonn and his Western European orientation versus my Eastern European one. We had some fun with, but his product was right on.

As I mentioned a moment ago, when I was still in the Eastern European Affairs in 1988-89, we were hearing expressions of concern and a lot of advice from Yugoslav-Americans, including Serbian-Americans, because during this time Milosevi? was making a big issues of Kosovo, that cradle of the ancient Serbian kingdom, where he celebrated the 600th anniversary of the battle against the Ottomans to a groundswell of Serbian nationalism. He was repressing Albanian Kosovar institutions and activities with Serbian police or paramilitary outfits. And the Serbian-Americans were very concerned because they felt the radical Albanian "terrorists" were driving Serbs out and making them hunker down in their homes and so on. There was an Albanian representative from New York, I think, in Congress who was very keen on pressing this issue from the other point of view, that it was the Serbian repression that was keeping the Albanians in Kosovo down and that we needed to restrain the Serbs.

These tensions were being amply reported by the embassy, and we in turn would report back information we were hearing from the travelers I mentioned, including the talk of "another Lebanon." This all added to the general bureaucratic knowledge of things, but the muddling-through idea, or hope, did persist. And with so much else going on in the world during that time-the opening of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990-the policymakers in Washington were understandably distracted. Perhaps because of this, I believe there was a wish that the Europeans could handle the Balkans, as they tried to do, or that the problem would somehow go away. Even so, in December 1992 President Bush publicly warned Serbia about Kosovo, figuratively drawing a "line in the sand," shortly before leaving office.

Interestingly what he talked about didn't really come to pass until later. The crisis and the break-up of Yugoslavia really began first with the short war in Slovenia, the Serbian "occupation" of Serb-ethnic areas in Croatia, the recognition of Bosnia, despite at least ostensible boycott by its Serbian population of the referendum there, and then the terrible conflict over Bosnia. I think many Yugoslav specialists, including myself, were not surprised at the conflict. Its ferocity was shocking, however, even though it echoed somewhat the ethnic skirmishing that took place during World War II when the German and Italian armies occupied Yugoslavia.

So there certainly were rumblings in the late 1980s, but even when I first went out to Yugoslavia, I think every Foreign Service officer who went there from the 1960s on felt that Tito would die on his watch and then the whole thing would come apart. One of the interesting things is that when Tito did die in 1980, it didn't really come apart; it hung on for almost another decade. They did "muddle along for a while, but Tito's strong arm and enormous prestige were gone, and ultimately the center could not hold.

Q: Okay. Anything else that we should say about your time as deputy director of EEY, Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia Affairs?

SEYMOUR: No, I don't think so. Except that I had the experience of being the acting director for about six months because two people had been whisked off to different places, first Marty Wenick, the director, and then in quick succession, Bob Perito who had moved up to become acting. Bob went over to the NSC (National Security Council) in January of, I believe, 1989, so I was acting director for about six months until the replacement came in, more or less when I was moved over to CE as the sole deputy director there.

I mention this, because it gave me a better perspective on the workings of the Department through my somewhat greater access to the daily policy meetings. Also, during that time we were implementing what was called the "step-by-step" policy of resuming normal relations with Poland after martial law. Dan Fried, who was the desk officer for Poland, was instrumental in this. He was the architect, you might say, of this policy, whereby we were pressing the Polish government to liberalize its attitude toward Solidarity: as they would show a bit more toleration of Solidarity, allowing the organization greater involvement in the civil society and governance, we would give something on our side by way of a high-level visit or some economic instrument, using those few tools that we had to promote a process that led eventually to more normal political involvement for Solidarity and more normal relations between our two countries.

Q: Dan Fried is now the assistant secretary for European Affairs?

SEYMOUR: Yes, he went on to become a wonderful ambassador in Warsaw and then served in the NSC as a director, I think, for Europe and now he's coming over as assistant secretary.

Q: Yes, I think he was sworn in just before the president's trip to, well to Moscow in early, earlier this month in May. Okay. In '89, then you moved over to Central European Affairs?

SEYMOUR: Yes, as deputy director. The job was interesting and enjoyable to me in another respect and that is the deputies traditionally handle personnel matters, including assignments. That wasn't quite the case in Eastern Europe or my scope in that respect was more limited, the "southern tier" and focused on the Balkans where the jobs were not then in such high demand. In Central European Affairs I met in the assignment bidding process a great number of really very fine young officers who have, many of them gone on to good things. That gave me a lot of pleasure and it also was interesting to be working in the personnel system, the vetting process in the Bureau, with the posts, and the lobbying through the paneling system.

But the big issue there was of course the fall of the Berlin Wall and the unification or reunification process. I moved to CE in the summer of 1989, and I recall early in that time a briefing by Ron Asmus, then from RAND, who later became a DAS in EUR. He and another were briefing on the defense options for holding the line in Germany. I believe there was a broad review underway of defense policy in Europe, perhaps because we were concerned about potential strains on the US military there. Our current posture had been to defend at the Fulda Gap and essentially hold the line at the West German border, a forward defense, but Ron and his colleague had studied the options if we had fewer troops. They concluded that it really made more sense to defend in depth, to bring back some of those forward-deployed units for a strategy that involved absorbing any thrust into the interior of West Germany and chopping it up there rather than trying to defend a 600-kilometer frontier. Now, we in CE did not like to hear this because it would introduce a sure political issue with the Germans, who would not be at all content if we were going to fight the battle within Western Germany instead of defending the border.

Another very prominent issue was sort of related. We were receiving growing complaints about US military exercises in Germany, low flying aircraft and so on. The Germans wanted to raise the floor for our aircraft there, and our military wanted to lower it, or at least hold the status quo. Fortunately, all that was washed away when the Wall went down. It was, of course in itself a momentous, wonderful development and a very exciting and moving time, especially for a lot of German hands who had been to Berlin and seen the Wall. I actually was there with the army, I think I may have mentioned earlier, for three years in the '60s just two years after the Wall had gone up. Anyway, those issues I mentioned were quickly obliterated and forgotten.

The period after it came down was a time of some craziness at first. With the prospect of German unification some other European countries tended to resume their 1945 positions, seeming not to realize that the world had moved on. I remember one of those was Yugoslavia. The Yugoslavs made noises about the reparations claims that they would be giving to the Germans. We told them that was absolutely crazy because if they were to start doing that with the Germans, then Germany could respond by changing their relatively liberal policies on admitting "guest workers" from Yugoslavia or on other forms of assistance they had been giving to Yugoslavia. So that Yugoslav notion went down really fast.

The French also were pretty surprised by the turn of events and wanted to know what its effects would be and what Washington's policy would be. The US approach made clear rather quickly was to support unification and just work out the details of it. In fact, we even put some of the big details onto the Germans, particularly, in the economic area, inter-German trade and so forth, and the Soviets were very upset with that. At the first "two-plus-four meeting that was one of the surprises, that the Soviets put such a great emphasis on economic and trade ramifications. They wanted such questions to be worked out in the two-plus-four context, that is, the two Germanys plus the four Allied Powers. This would mean that the Soviets would have a direct hand in the resolution of such issues within the four-power context, but our concept was that we were not re-opening the post-war peace treaty process, except perhaps for the issues directly related to the Allied authority in Berlin and our joint issues with Germany. For the rest, the trade and other relationships that had developed since the war between us, respectively, and the two Germanys were for each country to work out individually with them. We were not going to rewind the film back to 1945, but conceived of the discussions, the two-plus-four talks, as a mechanism to tidy up the situation.

The big issue for us was the Allied presence in Berlin and how to terminate that. The many questions of economics, property claims in large part, and the inner-German issues that had developed post-1945 were for the two Germanys to work out in the context of unification, while the respective soon-to-be former Allied Powers would work out their other issues bilaterally. Property claims of Americans, including many Jewish citizens fell into that category. To a large extent, they would follow as previous claims against the Federal Republic that had been worked out through established Holocaust settlement arrangements.

The Russians were concerned about the patterns of trade and the trade privileges they had enjoyed with East Germany, the DDR, which they felt might be changed or go up in smoke or whatever. They were also concerned about their facilities/property in East Germany and about getting housing in the Soviet Union for the great numbers of Soviet troops who would be returning from East Germany. That last was not an easy matter, and the Soviets negotiated with the FRG a staged withdrawal and also terms of economic assistance for housing construction, in which the US also participated.

As it turned out many of these things were worked out fairly easily, I think, fairly quickly, and it was not an unfriendly process, as it developed. Initially, though, there was a lot of concern and anxiety about how those kinds of problems would be resolved.

One issue that fell to me was to see to the basic staffing for addressing the Polish border issue which had not been resolved from the war. The Poles were very anxious for immediate assurances about that, and they also demanded participation in the talks because the issue was so important to them. They did not want to be left out of the decision making that they expected to take place on the subject, because it was a critical issue left open with the breakdown of the Allied peace negotiations after the War. Researching this and other issues sent us back to the history of it and to the State Department historian's office, which was a very interesting experience. Ultimately, a special arrangement was made to allow participation of the Poles in the process. A special foreign minister's meeting was scheduled to include the Polish foreign minister for the sole purpose of discussing the border issues and to ratify the existing border with Germany.

Q: It was Poland and the four allied powers?

SEYMOUR: Poland and the two plus four participants. They met and then they brought in Poland and that satisfied the Poles and I think everything worked out very well.

Q: A question for you is to what extent were you and Central European Affairs and the State Department involved in all of that? I think the general impression I had from reading the book by Phil Zelikow is that an awful lot centered at the NSC and of course the two of them, the two authors, were there, and they also talked about the role of, I guess Robert Zoellick.

SEYMOUR: Yes.

Q: But to what extent did the Office of Central European Affairs also get involved in all that went on?

SEYMOUR: Well through Zoellick we were very closely involved, along with the Legal Advisor's Office, for all the "Berlinery" (the legal issues related to the four-powered occupation status) that had continued to this time, and also the EUR front office.

The overall concept that we would welcome the fall of the Wall and the prospect of unification and would support Germany in this; that the talks would be about tidying up the past, the post-war situation, legally and in particular our presence in Berlin rather than entertaining reparations or anything like that; and that we would also leave as much as possible for the Germans to work out with each other and bilaterally with the other powers, that whole concept probably came from the NSC in discussion with upper levels at State. We filled in some details on that and in general supported EUR and Bob Zoellick, who was the key Seventh Floor official for the issue at State. We in CE welcomed that approach, and we had a prominent role in working out the details with Bob Zoellick, and in implementing the concept through staff support of the two-plus-four talks. These were ministerial-level talks carried out by the political directors (the EUR Assistant Secretary for us) and foreign ministers, with Bob Zoellick acting as a kind of coordinator between EUR and the Secretary, and, I believe, working a lot behind the scenes. The legal office also had a very prominent part, working at times with its counterparts in the other foreign ministries, which produced a certain amount of friction between the political equities and the legal points and procedures.

Bob Zoellick was very impressive in the way he handled all this. He was the overall manager or coordinator on our side at State, and I believe he worked with influence at the NSC. The first thing he asked for after being appointed as point man for this was a list of what were all the issues involved and where would the countries stand on them. He wanted a laundry list to flush out all the questions. Then he asked us to write up what we thought would be the chief concerns for each country-the four allied powers and the two Germanys-and what would their positions on each issue going into the talks. From this we were to develop what the U.S. objectives and negotiating positions should be.

This we worked out over several weeks in a very systematic and efficient way under his guidance, and through the clearance process, the clearing of these papers around the Department and elsewhere as necessary, it brought everybody into the process and all the wisdom we could gather. Then came the discussions, the chewing over of these papers in preparation for, first, the working-level meetings and then the ministerials. I should mention Ray Seitz, the assistant secretary for Europe. He represented us at the working-level, political directors meetings to prepare those foreign ministers meetings, and of course we worked closely with him and his deputy, Jim Dobbins.

I mentioned the legal affairs office; they got into it because of the Berlinery involved-the legal aspects of our status in Berlin, of the interaction among the allies over Berlin since the war and all of the legal questions related to that. I should also note that Jim Dobbins was the DAS under Ray Seitz who supervised Pierre Shostal, the office director for Central Europe, whose deputy I was. Our legal people quickly got in touch with their counterparts in the other countries, and they even managed to hold one meeting separately, I think in London, as a two plus four legal advisors meeting. But the political directors in all the countries reacted in concert very quickly against that. In fact, I can't quite remember how the legal advisors managed even to sneak off to London and have that meeting because they were told from the beginning that this was a political issue and not a legal one. I know that Jim Dobbins' view was that they needed to read their title as legal advisor and pay more attention to that. And there were a couple of instances where-

Q: That is, to advise but not-

SEYMOUR: Yes, to give advice. I don't know if he put it this way, but the thought was that we on the political side might decide to ignore their advice, perhaps at our peril, but we had the right to do so. And I do recall one time when he ignored lengthy additions that L, the Legal Adviser's Office, had made to an EXDIS cable we had drafted for posts dealing with the talks that had to do with an upcoming meeting. Jim excised large chunks of those additions, acknowledging they would not like his deletions in L but they had given us their advice and this is what we have decided to say. It was late and they had gone home in L but Jim said send the cable out. Sure enough, I was left the next morning to deal with an irate colleague in L, but we made it stick-and there was no problem.

All in all, though, I think the process was a very well-managed affair that the U.S. can really feel proud about, not only President Bush and the people at the NSC, Condoleezza Rice and Philip Zelikow and others, but also CE, which was very much involved. We sent an officer to the various meetings, who did the basic reporting, and we worked very closely and I think well in supporting Ray Seitz and Bob Zoellick.

Q: He was the Counselor of the Department at this time.

SEYMOUR: He was the Counselor, yes.

Q: And the secretary of state was James Baker.

SEYMOUR: Yes. And I could add two little notes about Baker and Bush. You remember I mentioned I was sort of the man for the Polish border. The fact that the US had not formally recognized the Polish borders was an issue I had dealt with earlier while working on Polish affairs. The reason is that it was part of the unsettled business of World War II and to recognize it, as our legal advisors had maintained-and also the people in CE-would be to act unilaterally as one of the four allied powers, thereby usurping or overstepping our bounds, and possibly jeopardizing other issues. Yet, the confirmation of Poland's postwar borders had remained a very important, vital issue for the Poles. The FRG had in effect confirmed them by signing the Helsinki Final Act, but that Act provided for peaceful change of frontiers, which the Poles feared might make it a matter the Germans could raise. At any rate, they saw as perhaps their most important goal in the two-plus-four talks to see their borders confirmed.

Our colleagues in EE, and Chris Hill, who was either the desk officer or the deputy director for the northern tier (Poland) at the time, were in constant contact with us about it. The Poles were pressing us about it and wanted some kind of assurance. The lawyers in L were arguing that the question of recognition remained to be settled in the framework of a final settlement to emerge from the talks, and argued against any early move on our part, so the issue continued to fester a bit within the State Department. At a certain point, though in a press conference following a White House meeting of Chancellor Kohl with President Bush, the President was asked if we recognized the Polish border, and he replied that "of course we do." This took the steam out of the lawyer's resistance, so in effect the border was "recognized" publicly by the President.

The other point of interest was similar and involved Baker as secretary of state. At our working level we had several discussions about whether the final settlement with respect to Germany should be submitted to the Senate for advice and consent. We were concerned that submitting it to the Senate might cause Senators to raise various nuisance issues. We talked to the lawyers and to our legislative affairs office, and they tried to work out ways in which it could be considered an executive agreement, but we were not really able to come to a decision about it. We took the question to Zoellick and kicked it around a bit with him, and finally he said: Let's just ask the Secretary, who knows better than anybody else here, how the Senate will react, as he had had a lot to do with Congress as chief of staff for Reagan at one time. We did put the question to the Secretary, and he responded the next day that yes, we'll send it to the Senate and they'll give their approval.

Q: And that's the way it was handled?

SEYMOUR: And that's the way it was handled. The only thing that arose that I'm aware of and it was more in our discussions on the Hill as we went around to brief key people in anticipation of submitting the "treaty" to the Senate, the only question they expressed concern about was property questions that might affect Americans and how was this going to be worked out. To this we could explain that there would be provisions for Americans to submit claims to the new Germany. As I recall, specific procedures for property claims were worked out between the two Germanys in separate agreements covering their unification.

Q: To what extent were you involved in decisions or discussion about kind of a realignment of U.S. embassy, diplomatic consular presence in Germany, the phase- out of the embassy in East Berlin and so on?

SEYMOUR: Well, I was involved quite a bit along with, of course, a whole lot of other people in personnel, foreign buildings, and other administrative offices of EUR and the Department. What I recall doing was drawing up a diagram or a model for staffing that we would need. My main aim, as I recall, was to strengthen our political and economic reporting around the new, larger Germany by taking some of the positions that would be released in the combining of our Berlin Mission and our Embassy in East Germany and putting them in consulates in the united Germany and also in the new Consulate General we would open in Leipzig.

The idea was that the combining of our two posts in Berlin into one Embassy would release additional positions to accomplish this. We had always held our reporting from constituent posts to be insufficient, given the federal nature of Germany and the diversity of its politics. What happens in Bavaria or in the Hamburg area or Nordrhein-Westfalen, not to mention the new states from the former East Germany, was pretty important. We had once had a consulate in Bremen that was closed a decade or so before, and even though we had consulates in Dusseldorf, I think perhaps now closed, and still maintained them in Stuttgart and Munich, they had small staffs and, at best one political economic reporter each who handled other duties as well. I discussed this with Pierre, who gave me the go-ahead to work it out with EUR to see how we could use these soon-to-be free positions to enhance reporting from the new Germany. I developed a pretty thorough plan for it but was reassigned before it could come to fruition. It was difficult. We were fighting a general desire to squeeze and cut, and, later, came the much harder challenge of having to open all those new posts in the former Soviet Union.

Q: As well as the former Yugoslavia.

SEYMOUR: Yes, and so I think my plan got overwhelmed, but the idea was and is certainly still valid.

Q: Was there any thought at the time about keeping a significant presence in Bonn as the embassy would be moved to Berlin?

SEYMOUR: I don't remember discussion of keeping a significant US presence, other than to manage a phased move to Berlin, but the Germans were concerned lest Bonn lose suddenly the economic benefits and prestige of being that important "small town in Germany." As I recall they decided to keep at least one of their ministries, possibly finance, in Bonn, and some elements of the Defense Ministry as well. Therefore, we talked about maintaining a small liaison office, but I am not sure that idea persisted.

What I do remember though was that we were going to get a raw deal in terms of the exchange of property because everything we had in Berlin had been requisitioned and maintained through "occupation" funds all those years. We owned outright only the property where the antenna for Radio in the American Sector (RIAS) was located, the flattened site on Potsdamer Platz in the East Sector where our prewar embassy had been, and the residence of our ambassador to the GDR. So those were the only three properties we owned, and I think the ambassador's residence was subject to a property claim. We did own a lot of property in Bonn whose value was going to tumble, so we were faced with having to buy expensive property in Berlin and sell low in Bonn. We were pressing the Germans hard to help us out with that, but they were not so keen, perhaps with the knowledge that they had been financing our operations in Berlin for all those years since the war. They may have helped a bit at the start, but I really don't know where that came out, because it was still in discussion when I went to my next assignment in late summer of 1991.

Q: Anything else we should discuss about your assignment in CE?

SEYMOUR: No, that covers the main work.

Q: Where did you go from there?

SEYMOUR: Well, from there I wanted to go to Europe and had my eye on several consulates general but I also put on my bid list a position at the Atlantic Council, because Roz Ridgeway, who had been the assistant secretary for European affairs during a good part of my time in the Bureau, was the new president there. They had a "NATO information office" that was run traditionally by a State Department officer on detail.

I went to that assignment and ran the NATO information office for two years. Half of that job was to work with the NATO information people on various programs to explain NATO and European defense issues to the American public and the Congress. One activity I liked very much that we carried out was to program officials and experts from NATO, occasionally the EU (we interpreted security broadly), European think-tanks or other transatlantic specialists for periodic breakfast meetings on the Hill. The House foreign relations committee was our sponsor there. Mike Van Dusen, the chief of staff for Lee Hamilton, our point of contact there, supported the program enthusiastically. He's now at the Woodrow Wilson Center with Lee Hamilton. He personally attended nearly all of our breakfasts, but it was sometimes difficult to get a good crowd. We did them on Mondays or Fridays, as the days when many Congressmen and staffers would be freer to come to such morning meetings and could be enticed by the chance to grab breakfast. It was popular with some, but we always had to beat the bushes for a good turnout. The events were mainly aimed at staffers, but members would occasionally show up too, especially if we had higher-level NATO officials. We ventured out a bit, though. I remember hosting a Polish scholar and activist I had known in Warsaw, and he attracted considerable interest talking about the "new" Poland.

In addition, I began to develop an entirely new project under our transatlantic relations program that got the Council into more operational activities than before. Roz Ridgeway had urged that we develop some way of filling the gap in US-German contacts that she predicted would come with the draw-down of U.S. forces in Germany. As we reduced that large military presence that had existed since the early postwar years to mainly a business and diplomatic presence, she felt that our two peoples would lose touch with each other or that the scope of our contacts would narrow. The project evolved from an idea for periodic high-level exchanges of representatives from government, the academic world, business, the new media, and others such as the British had to one of ground level-cooperation between state and local officials managed by NGOs in each country.

We needed very much to have an organizing partner in Germany, and we ultimately chose the government of Rheinland-Pfalz (Rhineland-Palatinate) and specifically their international affairs office. We were led to that choice because the then-minister-president Rudolf Scharping used to visit the U.S. each year, partly because of the large number of US forces stationed in his Land, or state, and he would usually stop at the Atlantic Council to see our Chairman, General Andrew Goodpaster, and often would give a talk or participate in a roundtable to discuss security issues and military-force questions. That gave me the idea, or actually it was my wife's idea. Scharping had visited the Council early that fall at a time when I had been to Germany to meet with some logical possibilities for our organizing partner there only to find them absorbed with other projects. I had exhausted the traditional possibilities and was at a loss for a partner and kind of at the end of my rope. Explaining this to my wife one evening, we brainstormed a bit and, recalling a Scharping visit recently, she asked why not Rheinland-Pfalz.

So I called a man named Werner Kremp, who was their chief of international affairs. I explained our concept to have two conferences in the first year one in one country and then a follow-up in the other and to focus on a large problem of mutual concern that we would bring state and local government, business, and academic experts from each country to address. Werner fairly lepta at the chance, suggesting they would host the first conference. We exchanged letters of intent between General Goodpaster and Minister-President Scharping, and we were off.

The Atlantic Council had in hand \$150,000 from the Ford Foundation for a project with Germany, which, by the way, Roz Ridgeway had personally obtained in a meeting at their headquarters. They had told her at the outset that they were moving away from funding projects with individual countries in favor of a regional approach and were not inclined to fund our project, but she convinced them that Germany was important enough as a country in Europe and the US presence there would be changing significantly enough that it would be worth developing some new programs and new relationships. So we got the money.

I stipulated to Werner that we wanted participation on an equal basis from Eastern Germany and that we wanted not to talk about political issues but about problems that our peoples were wrestling with. I put together a list of 10 or 15, even vetted it with a White House domestic affairs official. She suggested things like education, assimilation of immigrants, and health care as major domestic problems where international cooperation could be important.

Q: Health care?

SEYMOUR: Yes, health care was big here at that time. Health care, border problems, thinking Mexico and Canada for the US and for Germany, Poland. Urban renewal was another proposed topic. I have to credit a German Bundestag official here, because it was really his idea that formed a key turning point in conceptualizing the project. He was a staffer in the Bundestag whom I had met when I went to Germany looking for partners. I visited the German foreign affairs council, and our embassy in Bonn, which was quite supportive, arranged a lunch with representatives from the Stiftungen, a couple of others, and this fellow from the Bundestag. He suggested the idea of focusing on practical problems common to both countries, especially at the state and local levels like urban renewal. He foresaw that unification would bring into the new Germany many places in the East, whole cities he said, that were nothing but slums almost and in great need of renewal. You've done a lot of urban renewal, he emphasized, "Look at Baltimore and other places, Pittsburgh." So why not have that as an issue and why not, instead of involving the political "mucky-mucks," bring together experts and local level officials who work with these issues to talk together, compare experiences and needs and develop cooperation projects. And that's exactly how it happened, what we wound up developing.

With that idea in mind, I contacted the man in Rheinland-Pfalz, whom I mentioned, sent him a letter from General Goodpaster to Rudolf Scharping, the Minister-President, or governor, and we were off. Rheinland-Pfalz chose the topic of "base closings or defense conversion" and volunteered to host the first conference in March 1994, I think it was. It was now early November so we had to move fast to line up an American partner. I formed an advisory council to help me do that, and as one of the first members I sought out the staff director of the BRAC (Base Realignment and Closing Commission). The US was going through a round of base closings then. He was very enthusiastic and in one of our meetings he advised that we choose either South Carolina or California. I thought California a little far away for us, knowing that there would be some coordinating meetings and a lot of travel. South Carolina, I knew, already had some connections with Germany with the BMW plant that was going in there and other business investment. I wasn't sure whether the South Carolinians would feel they already had sufficient ties and would not be interested or whether it would make them more so.

The BRAC staffer advised that they had been hard hit by the closings but also had reacted effectively, first forming a very good public-private organization to oppose the cuts but, once the decisions were made, turning that organization around to deal with them effectively. He added that this organization comprised government, universities, and business at state and local levels, so I decided to contact South Carolina.

I made a cold call to the governor's office in Columbia to make the offer. I told them I had money in hand, I had a project, I had a German partner that was interested and wanted to do something on base closings and defense conversion, and I asked if South Carolina would be interested and with whom could I discuss the project. I got a name, Fred Carter, Executive Director of the state's Budget and Control Commission. Fred said they would be very interested and gave me a point of contact to work out the details.

This was November and the conference was to be in March. But fortunately the Germans had already begun the work of organizing it. The South Carolinians drew their participants from the people in the committee that had worked on the base-closings issue and were soon ready to go. In agreeing to the first conference that the Germans would host, they stipulated only two things. First, they wanted to decide the dress and secondly they wanted to do the name tags. The reason for this is that they wanted the dress to be casual, and they wanted the name tags to show in big letters the participants' first names, so from the beginning we would go by first names Jack and Werner, for example, rather than Herr Seymour and Herr Kremp. It took the Germans a bit by surprise, but it set an atmosphere of informality for the discussions right from the start, which proved extremely productive. This was the beginning of my acquaintance and my learning about South Carolina, and by and large I found it thoroughly enjoyable to be working with those people.

Another secret of the success of this project is that the government of South Carolina had decided that it would be run their participation out of their budget and control commission, which I learned is a little bit like a combined executive-legislative ways and means committee. Fred Carter, its staff director, was a former Marine who had come to the government from the political science faculty at the college at Charleston, which I learned is the oldest city college in the country with a lot of tradition and prestige in the state and the region. Fred was a very effective chair of the meetings and leader of the American delegation, and he was backed up by an influential state senator, who chaired the Budget and Control Commission. Both were actively and skillfully directing South Carolina's growing overseas engagement.

In the division of labor we worked out, part of my job was to bring in appropriate US government or other Washington-based participants to the American delegation of 15. We had 10 South Carolinians and 5 Washington participants on our "traveling" delegation, and the Germans roughly the same except they brought in a lot of local people as well-local officials, commercial specialists, and others-as did we when we hosted the follow-up conference in South Carolina..

A feature of the ground rules was to convene two conferences on the same subject the first year and each succeeding one if we agreed to continue. The first conference was in March of 1994, in Rheinland-Pfalz, and the second in Charleston in October with a core group of the same people plus some additions here and there according to the way the topics evolved. And so they started off that way, and the South Carolinians were just wonderful on this. The personal rapport, which they counted on and helped to establish, became a big part of it, and a big reason for the program's success. I have many, many memories of how it did work but one little thing I recall in this triangular relationship was interesting too.

The early sessions of the first base-closings conference at a nature preserve in Rheinland-Pfalz, which lasted four and a half days, were getting-to-know-you sessions where each of the three sides presented its situation and its problems and what it felt its needs were. I believe the South Carolinians went first and then after lunch the East Germans from Th?ringen (Thuringia). At one point their presenter was a former East German army guy who gave a crisp, military-style briefing that focused on a great laundry-list of problems and emphasized the great amounts of money needed for reform and development. He went on a bit about all the money they needed for this and that, pointing out that the Soviets were stripping the bases they were vacating of everything valuable and that they had been built in remote areas which needed transportation and other infrastructure and complaining that not enough money was coming from the capital in Bonn. After a bit, you could sense the West Germans questioning what was this guy going on about? I think one of them asked a pointed question, which caused a stir. Then a South Carolinian got up and said, in effect, wait, let's listen to this man, he's got a point. And that kind of helped break the ice and make it move along in a constructive fashion. I went up to this South Carolinian afterwards and told him he had done a really a good thing that averted a possibly bitter row, and he replied that he fully understood where the East German was coming from: "They've been defeated, it's all messed up, and they've got a big job ahead of them, and we can relate to that from South Carolina's own experience."

This immediate kinship they felt with the Germans both East and West was striking. Another item in that regard: Several years later, a South Carolina official went to a conference in Maine of officials from American states to talk up the benefits of this kind of international participation. I wasn't there but they sent me a copy of his remarks. In his opening, he described how he was going to talk about cooperation his state had developed with Germany and said that his audience might well wonder how South Carolina was doing this with Germany and how its people related to Germans. "Well the first thing you have to remember," he said, "is that we have a lot in common with the Germans: We both fought a war against the United States and lost!" So, the South Carolinians were very human, down to earth, humorous and informal, but also very serious-minded about using this cooperation to mutual advantage, and it worked superbly.

It's still going on, although Thuringia has been replaced by Brandenburg as the active former East German participant. They call it the "Transatlantic Conference," and it has spawned all sorts of cooperation projects, commercial, educational, and governmental on numerous common problems. It represents was one of the most gratifying endeavors I have ever undertaken and also a successful application of many of the skills and experiences gained in the Foreign Service. I cherish in particular the inscription on a plaque the German and South Carolinian delegations presented to me at the last conference I attended three years later when the project was by then fully launched:

...In grateful recognition of your successful efforts to promote

international understanding and cooperation by bringing together

two states, two nations, and two cultures...."

End of interview